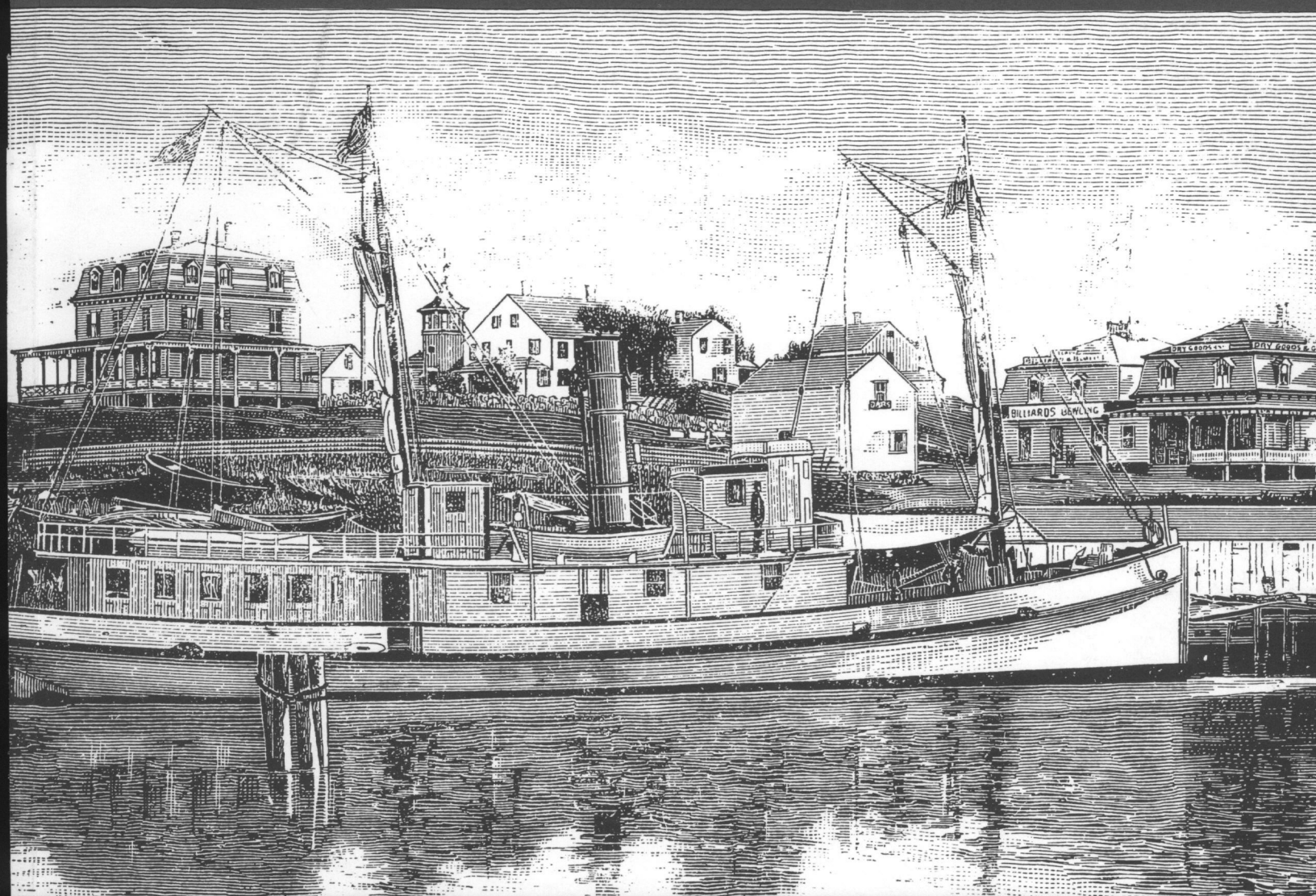
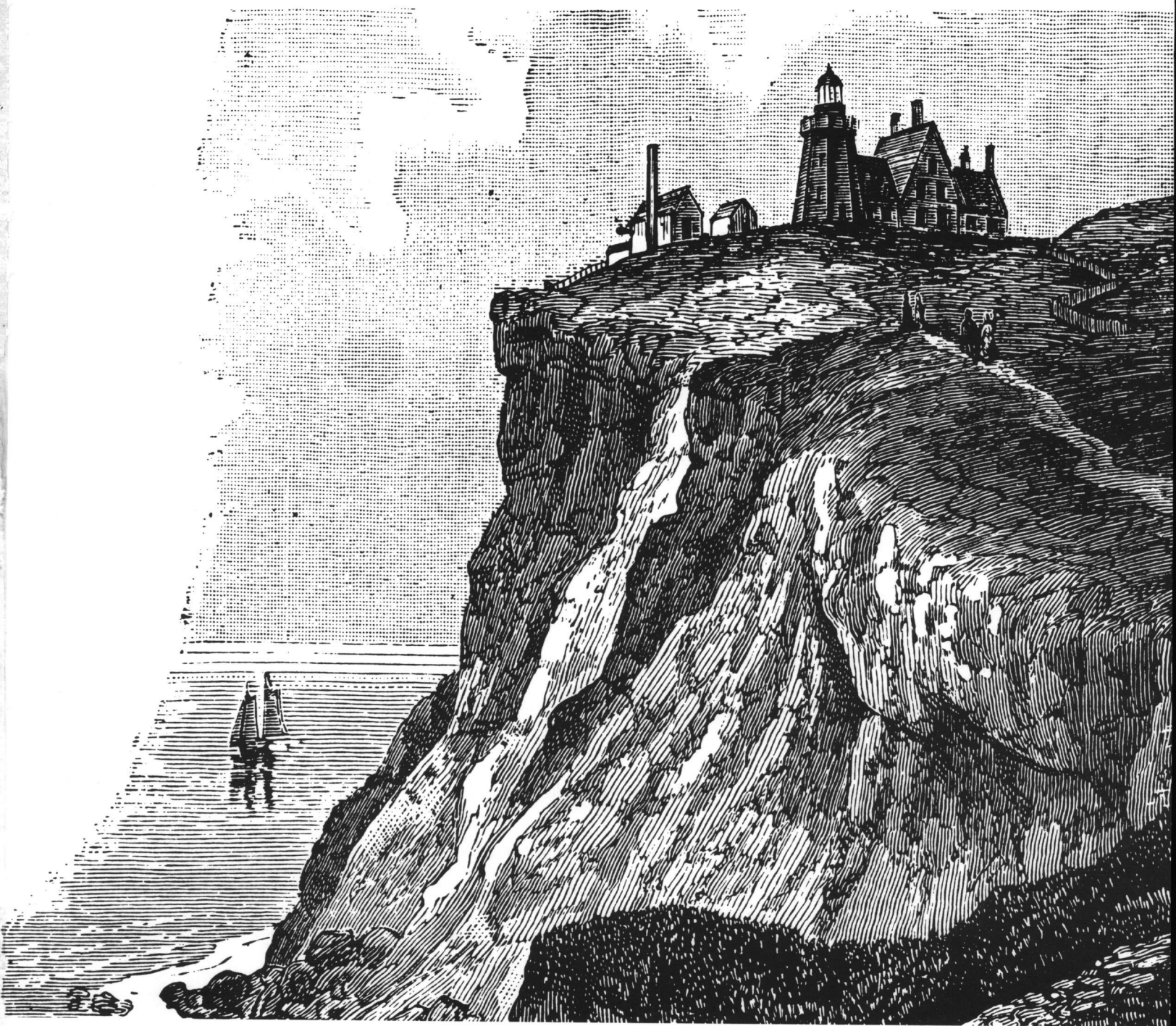


# Historic and Architectural Resources of Block Island, Rhode Island



Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

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Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission  
1991

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Since the original publication:

- >additional properties have been entered on the National Register;
- >some financial incentives referred to in these pages are no longer available;
- >some new financial incentives are available.

For up-to-date information, please contact:

Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission  
150 Benefit St.

Providence, RI 02903

(401)222-2678

[www.preservation.ri.gov](http://www.preservation.ri.gov)

[info@preservation.ri.gov](mailto:info@preservation.ri.gov)

The Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission is your state agency for historical preservation. The Commission identifies and protects historic buildings, districts, landscapes, structures, and archaeological sites throughout the State of Rhode Island.

*Cover: Government Harbor. Courtesy of the Block Island Historical Society. 1877 engraving in A History of Block Island, by Rev. S.T. Livermore. From the left, buildings include the Shamrock Cottage, Manisses Hotel, Adrian House and Cassius Clay Ball Store, later moved across Water Street.*

*Title Page: South East Lighthouse on Mohegan Bluffs. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society. 1886 engraving in Block Island: An Illustrated History, Map and Guide (abridged), by Rev. S.T. Livermore. The South East Lighthouse Foundation is working to move this landmark and to ensure its preservation.*

*Back Page: Surf Hotel. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society. 1893 advertisement in Illustrated Block Island, by Rev. S.T. Livermore. In the island's heyday as a vacation spot, Block Island tourists could choose from twenty-two hotels.*

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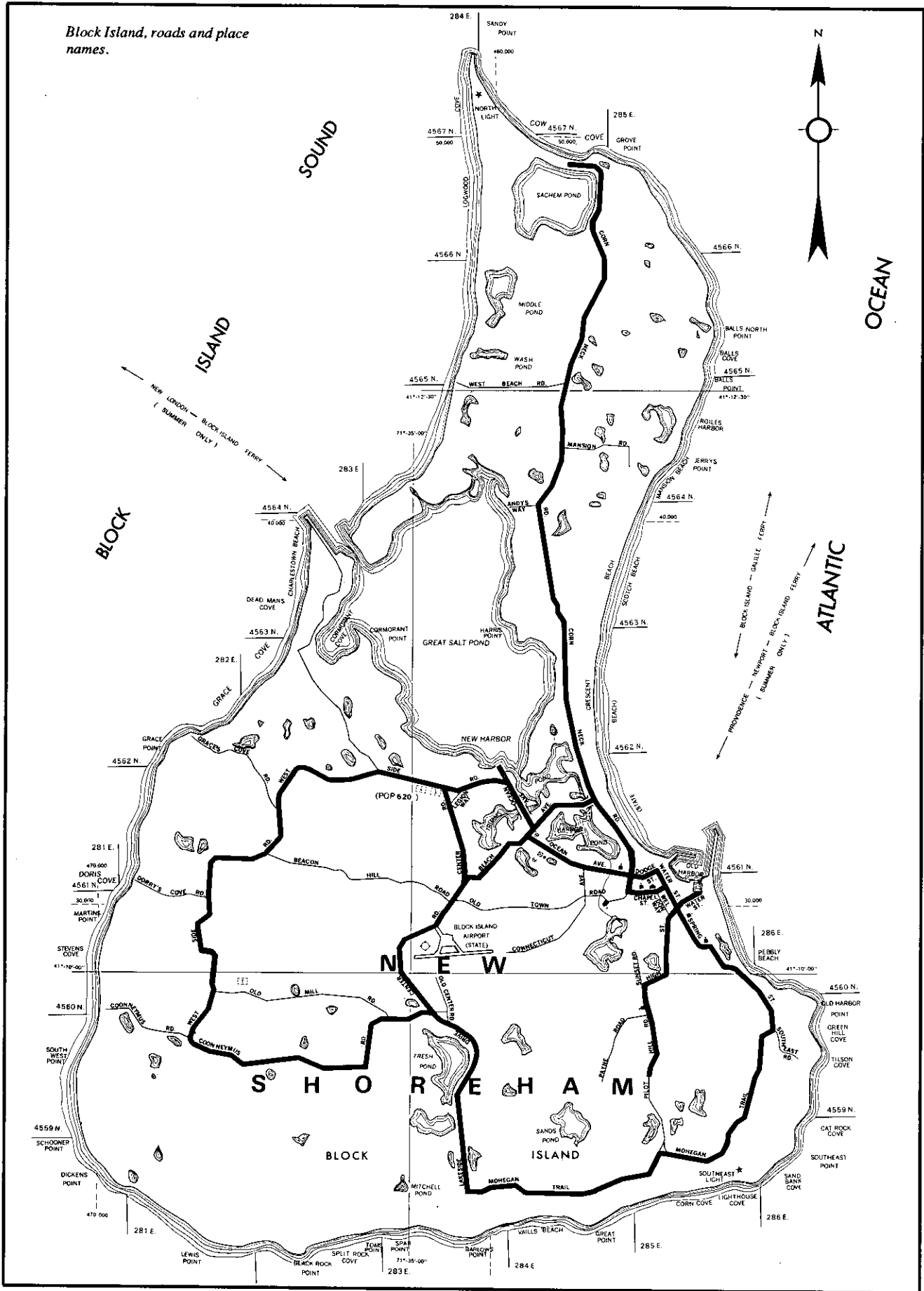
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## **PREFACE**

The Historical Preservation Commission is the state office for historic preservation. It is Rhode Island's only statewide historic preservation program which identifies and protects historic properties and archaeological sites. Created in 1968, the Commission consists of sixteen members who serve in a voluntary capacity. Nine members are appointed by the Governor, among them a historian, an archaeologist, an architectural historian or architect, a museologist, and an anthropologist. Seven state officials also serve, including the Directors of the Departments of Environmental Management and Economic Development, the Chief of the Statewide Planning Program, the State Building Code Commissioner, the State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Chairmen of the House and Senate Finance Committee. The Commission employs a staff of historians, architectural historians, archaeologists, and architects.

The Historical Preservation Commission is responsible for developing a state historical preservation plan; concluding a statewide survey of historical sites and buildings, and from the survey nominating significant properties to the National Register of Historic Places and the State Register; administering programs of financial aid including grants, loans, and tax credits; reviewing federal and state projects to assess their effect on cultural resources; and regulating archaeological exploration on state land and under state territorial waters.

Block Island, roads and place names.



## INTRODUCTION

This study encompasses the historic and architectural resources of Block Island. It is based on fieldwork and research conducted over many years by several individuals and organizations.

In 1985, Gerald F. Abbott, Robert Downie, and Judith Watts initiated and completed an island-wide survey of historic buildings, sponsored and funded by the Block Island Historical Society. This survey produced unusually extensive documentary research on Block Island's historic structures and a remarkable photographic record as well, which are being compiled for a forthcoming book. All later efforts in survey and evaluation of Block Island's historic buildings, including this one, have relied heavily on the information and images of the Block Island Historical Society's survey. In 1987 a survey of the town's buildings, structures, sites, and objects was conducted by Everett Associates under a Certified Local Government grant to the town by the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission. The first draft of the survey report, prepared in 1988, was revised to produce this publication.

Survey research involved extensive use of primary and secondary sources. Maps and atlases, town plats, deed records, newspaper accounts, and genealogical records--both singly and collectively--helped to document the history of properties on the island. The information and historical research for individual buildings collected for the Block Island Historical Society by Robert Downie proved invaluable in the preparation of both the historical overview and the inventory of historic resources.

This report begins with an overview of the town's physical setting in the first section. A short, illustrated account of Block Island's historical development follows in the second section. The third section contains a list of properties already listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places and a discussion of additional properties which may be eligible. The fourth section is a selective inventory of historic properties chosen to represent important or typical facets of the town's historical or architectural development. Though a relatively small number of properties are discussed directly in the report, the survey data sheets for all properties are kept on file at the office of the Historical Preservation Commission, 150 Benefit Street, Providence, and are available for reference.

Archeological sites which document the long history of Native Americans on Block Island before the beginnings of white settlement are essential components of Block Island's historic resources. The prehistoric archeological record of Block Island is extraordinarily rich and very significant. It is not, however, treated in this report, whose scope is limited to the period following white settlement. For information about prehistoric archeological sites on Block Island, some of which are entered on the National Register, consult the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission; for an overview of the subject, consult "The Indian Use of Block Island Between 500BC and AD1676," available at the Commission's office. The archeology of Block Island's historic period--the locations of the earliest settlements, for example--has not been systematically investigated. Nor have the underwater sites of shipwrecks off Block Island. Both categories of resources need to be researched, mapped and investigated. For further information, consult the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission.

The Commission wishes to thank the many individuals who contributed to the preparation of this report. Members of the Block Island Historical Society, including Gerald F. Abbott and Robert Downie, and the Block Island Historic District Commission, including William Penn and Homer Russell, read the preliminary draft and offered comments. Messrs. Abbott and Downie were especially accommodating in sharing their thoughts and insights about the island's history and character. The author

also acknowledges aid from the staff of the Providence Public Library and the Rhode Island Historical Society Library, especially Denise Bastien and Charlene Baer.

To all the people of Block Island, who serve as stewards of its historic resources and arbiters of its future, this report is dedicated.



## METHODOLOGY

The purpose of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission's surveys is to identify and record structures, sites, and areas of apparent historical, architectural, and visual significance within each community.

The Block Island survey was conducted by locating each building and structure on the island. Each property was photographed and recorded on a standard historic building data sheet, which includes places to note physical characteristics of the property, and its use, condition, and architectural style or period. Historical information, usually not available on the site, is obtained during subsequent research and added to the data sheet. Materials gathered by the Block Island Historical Society, including extensive deed research, geneological materials, and research in primary sources such as newspapers, were then incorporated into the survey data. Finally, this written report is prepared to provide a context for evaluating the historical and architectural significance of properties in the survey area. Data sheets are kept at the Historical Preservation Commission's office (150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903) and may be consulted there.

The significance of each surveyed property is evaluated in a preliminary fashion by Commission staff. Properties which appear to meet the criteria for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places are identified for further study and review. Though all aspects of local history are investigated to develop an adequate context for evaluation, the emphasis of the surveys is on identifying existing historic properties in anticipation of developing strategies for their preservation.

## PHYSICAL SETTING AND VISUAL CHARACTER

Block Island's setting and natural resources are fundamental to understanding the island as it exists today. Its natural assets and deficiencies have played important roles in determining the island's history and development.

Block Island lies in the Atlantic Ocean, directly south of central Rhode Island (with which it is connected by a year-round ferry service), twenty miles southwest of Newport, and fifteen miles northeast of Long Island. The island separates Block Island Sound to the west from Rhode Island Sound to the east. Roughly triangular in shape, it is seven miles long and about three-and-a-half miles wide across its widest, southern part. The Great Salt Pond, opening on Block Island Sound to the west side, divides the smaller northern section, known as the Neck, from the southern part.

Geologically, Block Island bears little resemblance to the Rhode Island mainland. Formed during the last glacial period, between 27,000 and 13,000 years ago, it is part of an extensive terminal moraine and was once connected with Long Island, Martha's Vineyard, Nantucket, and Cape Cod, to which it is geologically related. Like its geological cousins, Block Island is composed of loose glacial deposits and a small amount of other unconsolidated or weakly consolidated and sedimentary rock; bedrock lies far below the surface and is little exposed. Since its formation, Block Island has been subjected to steady erosion by winds, currents, and storms and thus, in geological chronology, enjoys only a transitory existence.

The surface of Block Island has an undulating, irregular—at places knobby—landscape, a wealth of ponds and wetlands, and abundant low vegetation, including small trees and shrubs. The land form is largely the result of glacial activity and subsequent erosion caused by wind and water. The highest point is Beacon Hill, southwest of the Great Salt Pond, which rises 211 feet above sea level. Several other hills in the southern section of the island exceed 150 feet. The coastline, subjected to constant change by erosion and sedimentation, ranges from low beaches on the north and west to high bluffs on the south and northeast. An ample supply of fresh water is provided by a complex aquifer system, which feeds many of the island's 360 fresh-water ponds and marshes.

Beside the shifting and eroding coastline, land forms have changed little over the past few centuries; above-ground elements in the landscape—vegetation, buildings, and structures—have varied considerably through time. Man's presence has also occasioned sequential changes in visual character, so that landscape features developed for a series of sometimes contradictory uses now stand incongruously if picturesquely side by side.

Once heavily forested, Block Island was stripped of trees by the late eighteenth century, as European settlers felled the island's trees for farmland and used them for fuel and construction material. After the mid-nineteenth century, tourism superseded farming as the island's economic base, and opportunistic scrub vegetation gradually filled many of the old fields as well as the edges of side roads, ponds, and swales. While not "covered with trees," as Giovanni da Verrazzano described it in 1524, it is lushly blanketed with low-lying deciduous trees and shrubs.

Settlement is concentrated around Government Harbor, on the island's east side. The road system is limited to a few, paved two-lane roads which extend from the town center. The web of paved roads is extensively supplemented by unimproved lanes. For large portions of the island the lane remains the only means of reaching outlying fields and houses. These unimproved ways are often rough and narrow.

The landscape of Block Island reflects its evolution in land use from forest to farmland to heavy random vegetation, a sequence common throughout southern New

England. Across the small-scale, gently rolling hills, the island's evolved landscape retains the stone-walled fields and extensive lane system of its agricultural phase and the larger-scale engineering and construction projects that recall its maritime and recreational activity: breakwaters, piers, lighthouses, hotels, and summer houses. Combined they create a vivid, historic landscape of great appeal.

Pasturage or tillage occurred islandwide, and an agricultural landscape developed through land clearance and construction of stone walls into a loosely organized rectangular patchwork of fields and lanes, a pattern evident even in revegetated areas.

By the mid-nineteenth century, this functional, open farm landscape was seen as "a great defect in the landscape, and a drawback to its pleasantness as a summer resort."<sup>1</sup> As tourism increased and farming declined, the open fields gave way to a softer landscape of scrub trees and thickets, especially in the many swales and gullies, alongside walls, and across abandoned farmland. The remaining cleared fields, however, evoke the agricultural landscape common a century ago.

Maritime and tourist activities superimposed changes on the agricultural landscape. The creation of two harbors—Government Harbor on the east and the New Harbor in the Great Salt Pond—both modified existing landforms and encouraged further development.

Today, the undulating land and lush vegetation provide an absorptive landscape that shields the growing number of new buildings. The land has long accepted the imposition of wall, field, and small house with exceptional grace. The gently rolling land, filled with small-scale buildings and rectangular fields, stands in contrast to the size and power of the ocean around it.

Because of the ocean, the island has a milder climate than the mainland: spring comes and fall lingers later, winter is milder, and summer is cooler. Weather is tempered by the Gulf Stream and the slow warming and cooling of the surrounding ocean. Storms punctuate the weather, and fog is common. Storm, fog, and treacherous sea have always played an important role in Block Island's history, especially in limiting access and development.

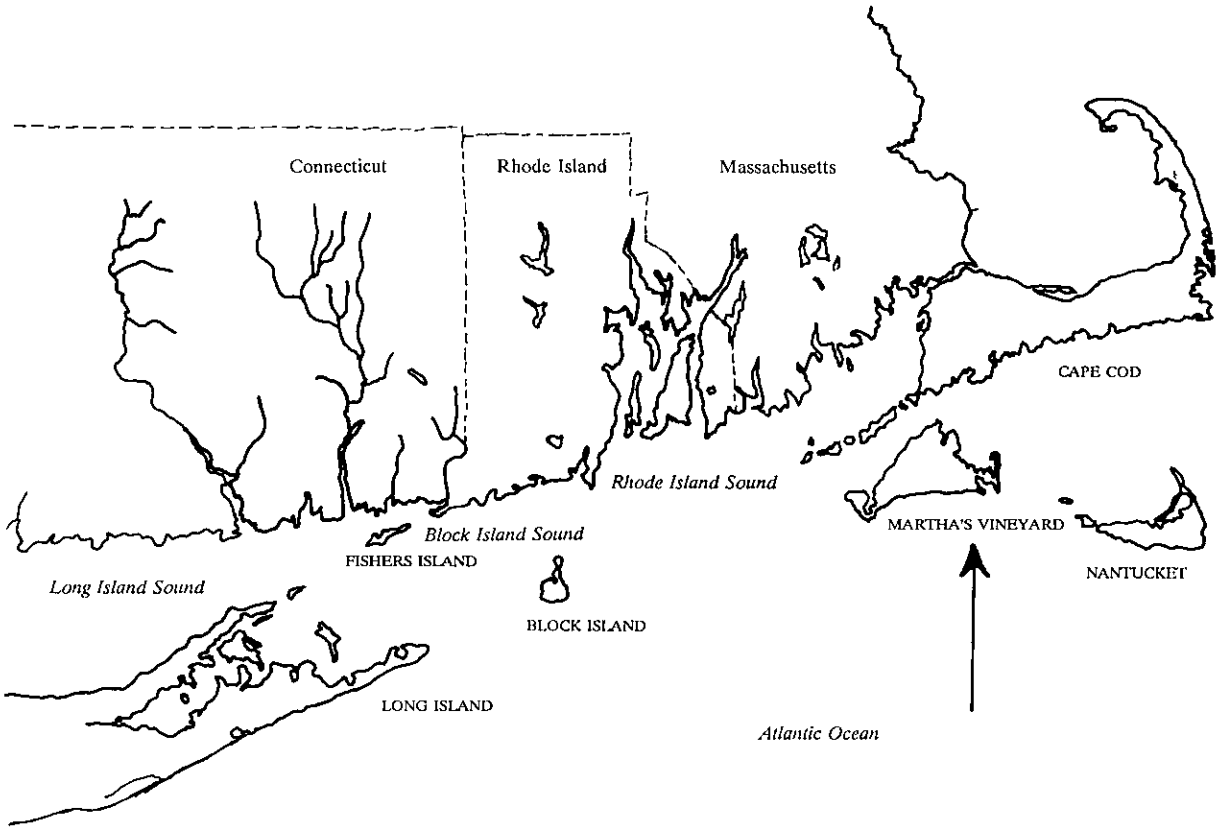
The survival of this remarkably intact and yet dynamic landscape owes much to limiting geographical factors. As for any island, physical isolation from the mainland here slowed settlement and development. Block Island was further hindered by its lack of a natural harbor. Consequently, the island never played a significant role in the extensive shipping activity that occurred along the New England coast during the first two centuries of European settlement. Only lighthouses and life-saving-stations served the many ships that sailed around—and occasionally to—the island.

## **DISCOVERY, SETTLEMENT, AND EARLY DEVELOPMENT: TO 1850**

Block Island's location and its lack of a natural harbor significantly restricted its appeal for settlement and affected its early history and development. Indeed, contact and settlement occurred relatively late in the context of coastal New England, and early growth was limited. For most of its first two centuries, Block Island remained a remote

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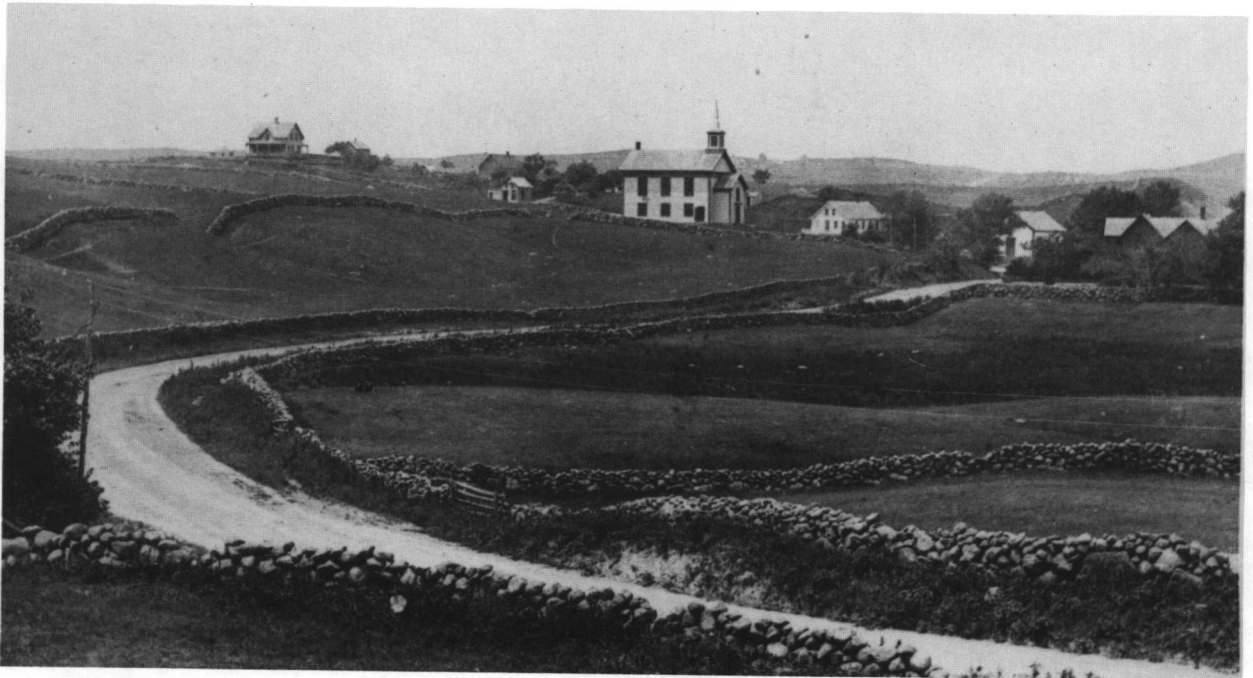
<sup>1</sup>Henry T. Beckwith, "The History of Block Island" *Historical Magazine*, April 1858.



*Block Island, location in southern New England.*



*Southeast Bluffs. Courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society, c. 1900 postcard. View west to Vail Cottages (1885), built on high bluffs.*



*Road to Beacon Hill. Courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society. 1897 Photogravure by A.W. Herman. View of stone-lined road to Free Will Baptist Church (1870, burned 1919.)*

agricultural and maritime community whose economic activity was limited to trade in only a few commodities.

In 1524, Giovanni da Verrazzano noted the island in his diary as he sailed past it. The first recorded European contact occurred in 1614, when Adrian Block, a Dutch trader, initiated trade with the island's Indians, the Maniseeans. To European settlers, the island became known first as Adrian's Island and permanently as Block Island because of his repeated and probably exclusive communication with the island and its native inhabitants.

Block seems to have enjoyed peaceful relations with the Indians, but in 1636 they killed John Oldham, an English trader. Oldham's death prompted a retaliatory expedition from the Massachusetts Bay Colony; led by Colonel John Endicott, the expedition destroyed two coastal villages. The Endicott expedition formed the basis for the Massachusetts Bay Colony's claim to Block Island. Following a second expedition in 1637, led by Israel Stoughton, Narragansett sachem Miantonomi confirmed the Massachusetts Bay Colony's right to the island, and the Maniseeans agreed to pay an annual tribute to the colony. The archeological record of Native Americans on Block Island is unusually extensive and significant; it is not treated here. Easily visible evidence of Block Island's first residents is sparse, though the Indian Cemetery may be seen on the east side of Center Road, near the airport. The Indian population of the island diminished through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; in 1662, there were about 1000 Native Americans; in 1700, 3000, and in 1774, only 51.

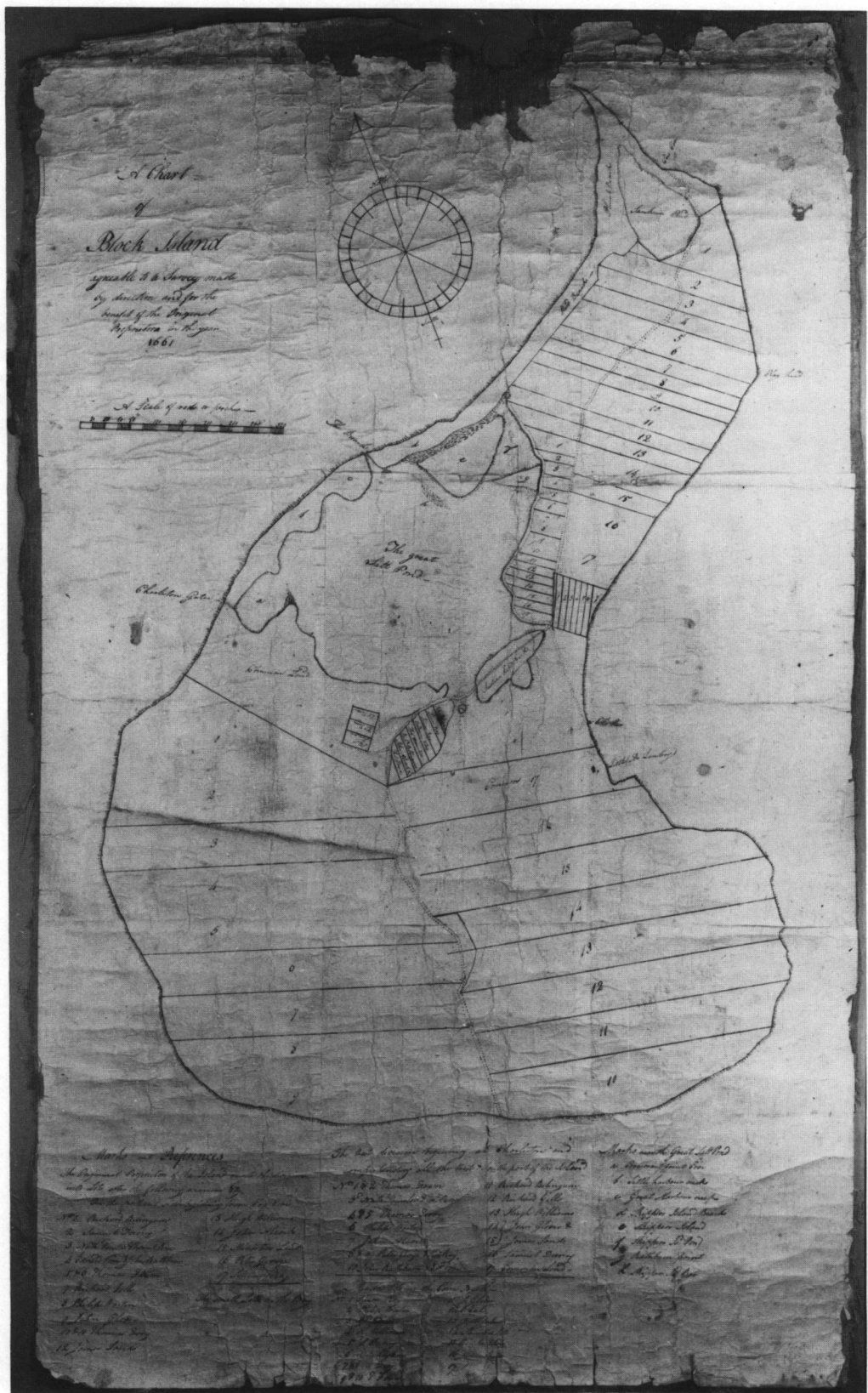
Between 1638 and 1658, the island was not settled but used as a trading place, and for pasturing livestock. Trading places were established along the New England coast during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries as an attempt to regularize activities between Europeans and Indians. Only one trading place, identified on a 1661 map and located between Harbor Pond and Crescent Beach, is documented on Block Island. Operated by a Dutch captain, Kempyo Sybada, it was seized by Captain Edward Hull in 1653 and thereafter operated by the English. These traders were probably the first white inhabitants of the island.

Ownership of the island changed frequently in the middle of the seventeenth century. In 1658, the Massachusetts Bay Colony sold the island to Richard Bellingham, Daniel Dennison, William Hawthorne, and John Endicott, who led the 1636 expedition. In 1660, the four sold the island for four hundred pounds to a company of sixteen men, led by John Alcock, M. D., of Roxbury, Massachusetts, who intended to "erect a plantation" there.

In 1661, Peter Noyse of Sudbury, Massachusetts, accompanied by proprietor Thomas Faxon, surveyed the island and divided it into over sixty lots. The lots were divided into seventeen portions, one for each of the proprietors and one for a minister;<sup>2</sup> there was no common land. Large rectangular lots were created on the Neck and across the broad southern part of the island, and smaller lots were arranged around the south and east of the Great Salt Pond. The large lots were oriented along an east-west axis, stretching across the Neck and divided on the southern part of the island into two tiers on either side of a north-south line. This organization suggests that concentrated settlement was planned for the center of the island, between the Great Salt Pond and the Island Cemetery, and that outlying areas were intended for farming and grazing livestock.

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<sup>2</sup>The setting aside of ministerial lands was common in Massachusetts Bay and Plymouth Colony settlements; such lands were made available to a settlement's minister or—perhaps more commonly—rented to those not owning land, and the proceeds were used to support a minister. Especially in far-flung Massachusetts satellites, such lands were often put to their intended use considerably after settlement, if ever.



Block Island, 1661. Plan, showing survey for Original Proprietors. Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society.

poultry, eggs, cheese, and grain. By the mid-nineteenth century the staples of the trade economy were corn, oats and poultry. The clearing of land for farms was at least partially responsible for the appearance of the island today. By the early eighteenth century the town discouraged the indiscriminate cutting of timber. Indeed, until the age of coal and oil, the island's principal fuel was not wood but peat dug from its wetlands.

Despite the lack of a natural harbor, a trade in agricultural produce connected Block Island to Newport, Providence, New London, and Stonington. Agitation for a harbor began soon after European settlement. The first settlers saw potential for a harbor in two locations: the Great Salt Pond and within the broad crescent on the island's east side. The islanders' inability to realize a satisfactory harbor with ample moorings severely limited development and communication with the mainland.

The earliest efforts at creating a harbor were concentrated on opening the Great Salt Pond to the sea. At the end of the seventeenth century the first entry into the pond was formed by widening and deepening a creek that drained to the sea on the west side of the Island. Constant maintenance was required to keep the breachway open, and the town abandoned its efforts in 1705. The breachway continued to be used by small vessels until a violent storm closed the opening around 1720.

The area north of today's Old Harbor, along Crescent Beach, seems to have been used as a marine landing through the eighteenth century, until the Great Gale of 1815. In 1816, the Pole Harbor developed in this vicinity: tall poles sunk into the ground of the shallow cove provided moorings for the island's fishing boats. The Pole Harbor, however inadequate, was considered far better than no harbor at all and had more than a thousand moorings at its acme. It remained in use from 1816 until the present breakwater was constructed farther south on the island's east side in 1870-76.

Aids to navigation were required on Block Island's shores as shipping increased along the New England coast in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. While the unsheltered shoreline restricted the island's access to visitors, it left the island vulnerable to war and piracy; the island was raided during the American Revolution and the War of 1812. The island's shoals and treacherous currents threatened shoreline travelers in the sea lanes between Long Island and Rhode Island Sounds. Maritime misadventures, strandings and shipwrecks around Block Island became familiar occurrences. The 1781 foundering of the British merchantman *Warrior* on the sand bar at Sandy Point and the 1806 wreck of Brown and Ives's *Ann and Hope* were living memories in the 1820s when Congress appropriated funds for the island's first lighthouse at Sandy Point, on the island's north end, in 1829. A succession of four structures served the north end of the island, but none lit the southern end of the island until the 1870s.

The few early buildings that survive on Block Island are vernacular houses similar to those built on the Rhode Island mainland from the late seventeenth through the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Structures were built using post-and-beam, vertical plank-wall construction and covered with clapboards or, more often, shingles, a technology common to mainland Rhode Island. They are simple structures with low stone foundations and center chimneys; construction of the end-chimney house, the Rhode Island Stone-ender, is unrecorded on the island. Almost all of the early houses were one-and-a-half stories high with a simple gable roof or, more rarely, the double-slope gambrel roof.

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<sup>4</sup>None of the Rhode Island architectural studies examined Block Island's early houses, and such activity is beyond the scope of this study, which can only relate what is already known about Block Island's early buildings to the studies conducted principally by Norman M. Isham and Antoinette F. Downing.



The center-chimney Peleg Champlin House (ca. 1820) on Rodman Pond Lane is one of the best preserved of these. Its use of a traditional five-room plan and its simple geometry underscore the relative immutability of local building practices until the middle years of the nineteenth century. And, indeed, the similarity of form and plan shared by the few early buildings on the island makes difficult the task of assigning dates of construction and charting the developmental history of early Block Island architecture. Most early houses were once the center of a farm, surrounded by cleared fields outlined by stone walls, amid a small cluster of outbuildings—barns, sheds, privy, corn cribs. These outbuildings are the most fragile elements of historic farms, but several of Block Island's early houses, such as the Benjamin Littlefield House (1854 et seq.) on Corn Neck Road, are still surrounded by historic farm structures.

In 1850, Block Island houses were sprinkled across a cleared, hilly landscape. The area southeast of the Great Salt Pond, the area originally planned for compact development, had more buildings than other parts of the island; however, there was no identifiable town center, and commercial activity was carried out in three or four of small stores and in numerous private transactions involving cash or barter. Only one tavern, on the site of the First Baptist Church, stood on the island. The isolated and tranquil subsistence agricultural and maritime community was to change dramatically, however, in the second half of the nineteenth century.

## "RAPID IMPROVEMENT": 1850-1900

The character of Block Island and the course of its future development were significantly and permanently altered during the second half of the nineteenth century. During the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Block Island was transformed from an Indian settlement to a colonial European township; once this shift occurred, development proceeded in an established context with little external stimulation:

Its normal state for two hundred years was isolation. Its inhabitants had little intercourse with the mainland...and formed a sturdy, self-sustaining little republic, independent of their neighbors and careless of the great world without.<sup>5</sup>

At the middle of the nineteenth century, however, Block Island again captured the attention of off-islanders who created—or at least created a demand for—significant changes in the island's physical appearance and the introduction of buildings and structures quite different from those built over the previous two centuries. Understanding the context of these changes requires scanning broad patterns of activity occurring along the New England coast during these years.

The New England coast has long held appeal as a vacation spot. Beginning in the eighteenth century, South Carolinians and Georgians retired seasonally to Newport to avoid sweltering southern summers. America's industrialization and urbanization during the nineteenth century intensified the difference between town and country simultaneously making the former more crowded and the latter more accessible, through changes in transportation technology like the train and the steamship. Attractive spots along the coast began to develop as summer resorts in the 1830s and 1840s: Newport, Narragansett Pier, and Watch Hill began to experience more visitors during these years, and other coastal towns like Little Compton and Warwick soon saw similar development.

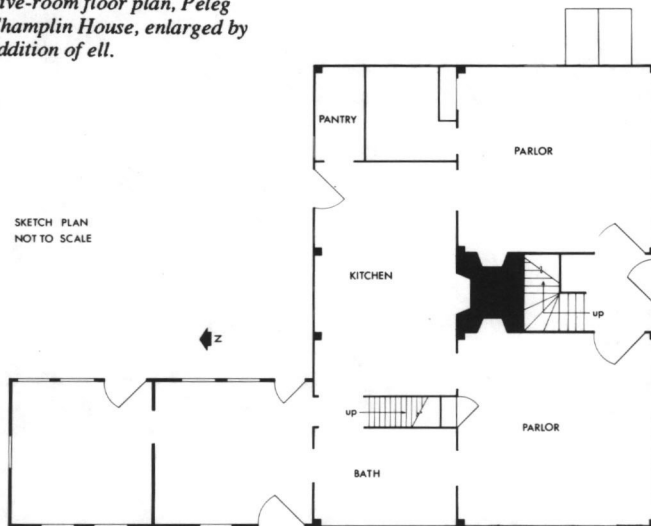
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<sup>5</sup>Charles Burr Todd, "The Island of Manisses," *Lippincott's Magazine* 30 (December 1882): 530.

*Peleg Champlin Farm (c. 1820), Rodman Pond Lane. Courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society. One of the best-preserved early farmsteads with beautiful dry-laid stone walls.*



*Five-room floor plan, Peleg Champlin House, enlarged by addition of ell.*

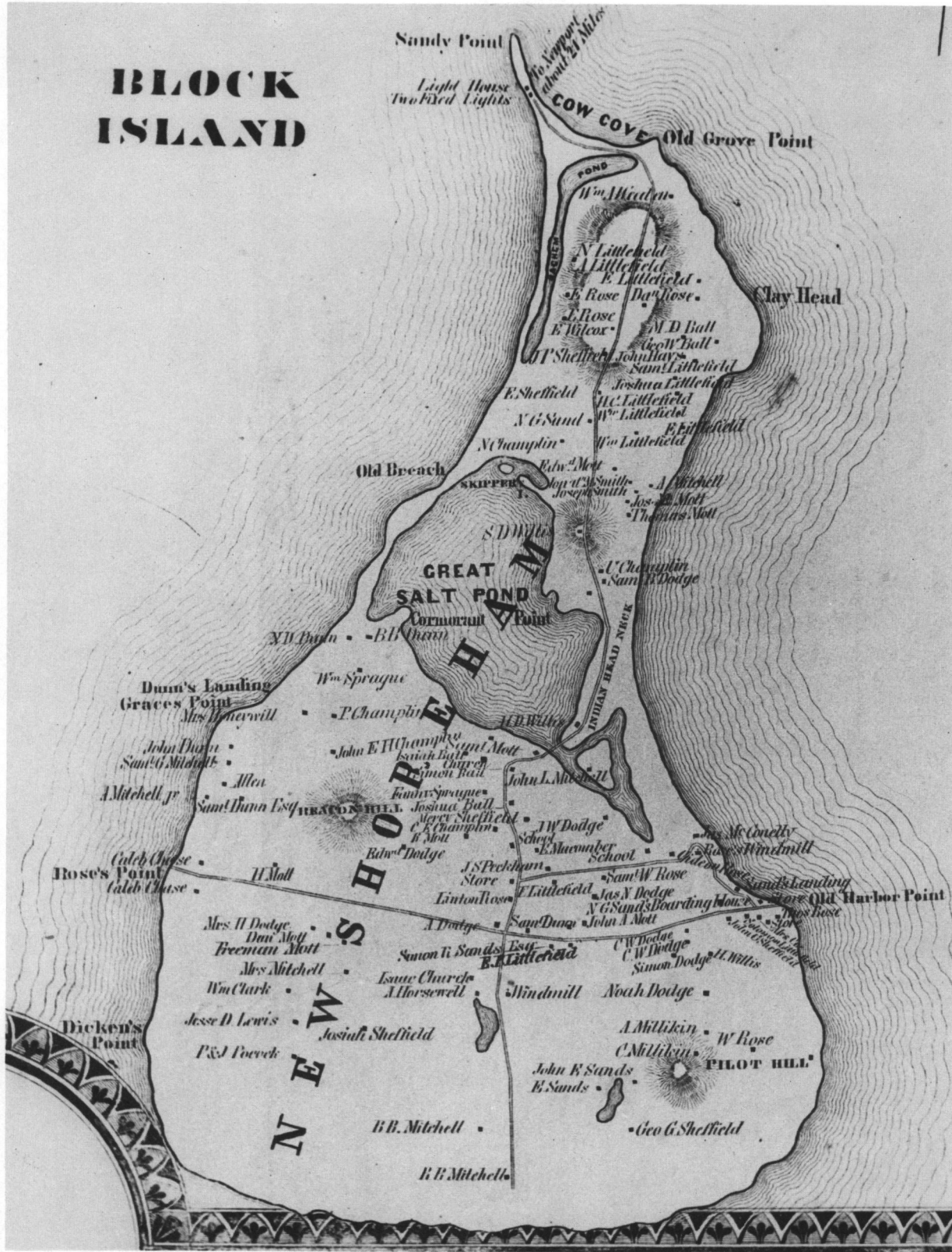


*Keeping room, Peleg Champlin House (c. 1820). Photograph by Judith Watts. View shows wide Federal style mantel, exposed framing and plank ceiling.*



*Benjamin Littlefield Farm (1854 et seq.), Corn Neck Road. View of small house, enlarged c. 1890, late 19th-century wood shed and privy, typical of island farms.*

# BLOCK ISLAND



Block Island, 1850. Map showing roads and structures. A secondary network of cart paths, which is the basis for today's roads is not shown.

While these vacation spots varied in character and clientele, their appeal originally relied on salubrity, simplicity, and natural, unspoiled beauty—all foils to complex city life.

Block Island underwent several signal changes. Improvements to navigational aids and to the harbor made the island more accessible to fisherman and visitor alike. Growing popularity for seaside vacations created a demand for boarding houses, hotels, and summer houses. In a short span of fifty years, Block Island's landscape acquired another layer of activity and of structures to house this activity. And while the assimilation of a summer community into a rural farming town sometimes occurred almost imperceptibly—as in Little Compton—the addition of new activities, new building types, and a new aesthetic forcefully affected the island's landscape and architecture.

Resort development on the mainland often begins incidentally, but such activity on an island requires concerted effort. Because Block Island needed improved harbor facilities to succeed as a summer resort, the creation of the breakwater and harbor—known successively as Government Harbor, New Harbor, and Old Harbor—played a key role in the transformation. Other islands on the New England coast—Fishers Island, Nantucket, and Martha's Vineyard—enjoy natural harbors, but as the histories of the four islands differ remarkably, there is little basis for comparison among them. Within the context of the four islands, however, it is significant that Block Island was the first, and in some ways the only, one of the group to encourage summer visitors on a large scale.<sup>6</sup>

The first hotel on Block Island opened in 1842 near the north end of Spring Street, overlooking Government Harbor on the site of the later Adrian Hotel (now the First Baptist Church); the Spring House on Spring Street followed in 1852. Islanders began to take in vacationers during the late 1840s and 1850s, and by 1860 there were three hotels, with combined accommodations for a hundred visitors. Tourists remained hindered, however, by the island's limited accessibility.

The centuries-old problem of sheltered-harbor access was finally solved by the construction of Government Harbor on the island's east side. Island native Nicholas Ball (1828-1896)<sup>7</sup> played a significant role securing the funding for the project: exploiting an extensive network of business and political connections, in 1867 he organized efforts to lobby the United States Congress for funding of a breakwater and harbor on Block Island. Work on the \$155,000 project began in 1870. Two rip-rap breakwaters of mainland granite extending into the ocean 1500 feet to the north and 1000 feet to the east were erected just south of Crescent Beach and at the junction of Spring, High, and Dodge Streets. The inner basin, built to protect equipment used during construction, was to be removed after the breakwater's completion but was left at the request of islanders. Building continued until 1876, but the harbor was in use by 1874, when a temporary pier accommodated the first large steamships to stop regularly.

Concomitant with the creation of Government Harbor were other improvements to navigational aids. The 1829 lighthouse at the north tip of the island was replaced by successive structures in 1839, 1857, and—with the stone structure still standing—in 1867.

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<sup>6</sup>Martha's Vineyard and Nantucket both enjoyed strong economic bases derived from maritime pursuits and therefor were far more developed by the mid-nineteenth century. Martha's Vineyard's first significant summer population occurred because of Methodist camp meetings. Fishers Island remained in individual ownership until 1871, and its development as a summer colony was closely controlled by property owners.

<sup>7</sup>Ball went to sea in 1838, sailed to Britain and the Continent, and traveled widely in the western hemisphere. During the early 1850s he successfully panned for gold in California and in 1854 returned as a comparatively wealthy man to Block Island, where he managed an island hotel and represented the town in the Rhode Island General Assembly between 1854 and 1873.

The increase in sea traffic during the nineteenth century, and especially after the opening of the Government Harbor, occasioned greater maritime activity. The need for a lighthouse on the south side of the island was evident by the 1850s. Although Congress appropriated \$9,000 in 1856 for its construction, the newly formed U. S. Light-House Board applied the funds elsewhere, and the project languished. In 1872 Nicholas Ball, confident from his successful lobbying for the harbor, led a similar campaign for the South East Light, and in the spring of that year Congress appropriated \$75,000 for its construction. Placed into service in February 1875, the ample brick structure has a first-order Fresnel lens and fog signal house (since removed). Its design, similar to a lighthouse erected contemporaneously in Cleveland, Ohio, illustrates the Light House Board's tendency to rely on standardization in lighthouse design.

Two life-saving stations were constructed at the same time as the new lighthouse. Following the Civil War the U. S. Life-Saving Service expanded its services along the New England coast; the Service made a survey of the coast to determine sites, and through this tour and the persistence of Nicholas Ball, a station was located on Cooneymus Road in 1872. A second station, at Government Harbor on the east side, followed in 1874, and the west side station was replaced in 1886 with a structure built to a standardized design. Later stations were built on Crescent Beach in 1890 and at Sandy Point in 1900.

Fishing was the second industry of the island. The full realization of the island's potential fishing productivity was stifled by the lack of a good harbor, which did not exist until the establishment of Government Harbor (now Old Harbor). For years by necessity the Island made use of the double-ender, a distinctly New England boat which could be easily landed on the beach.

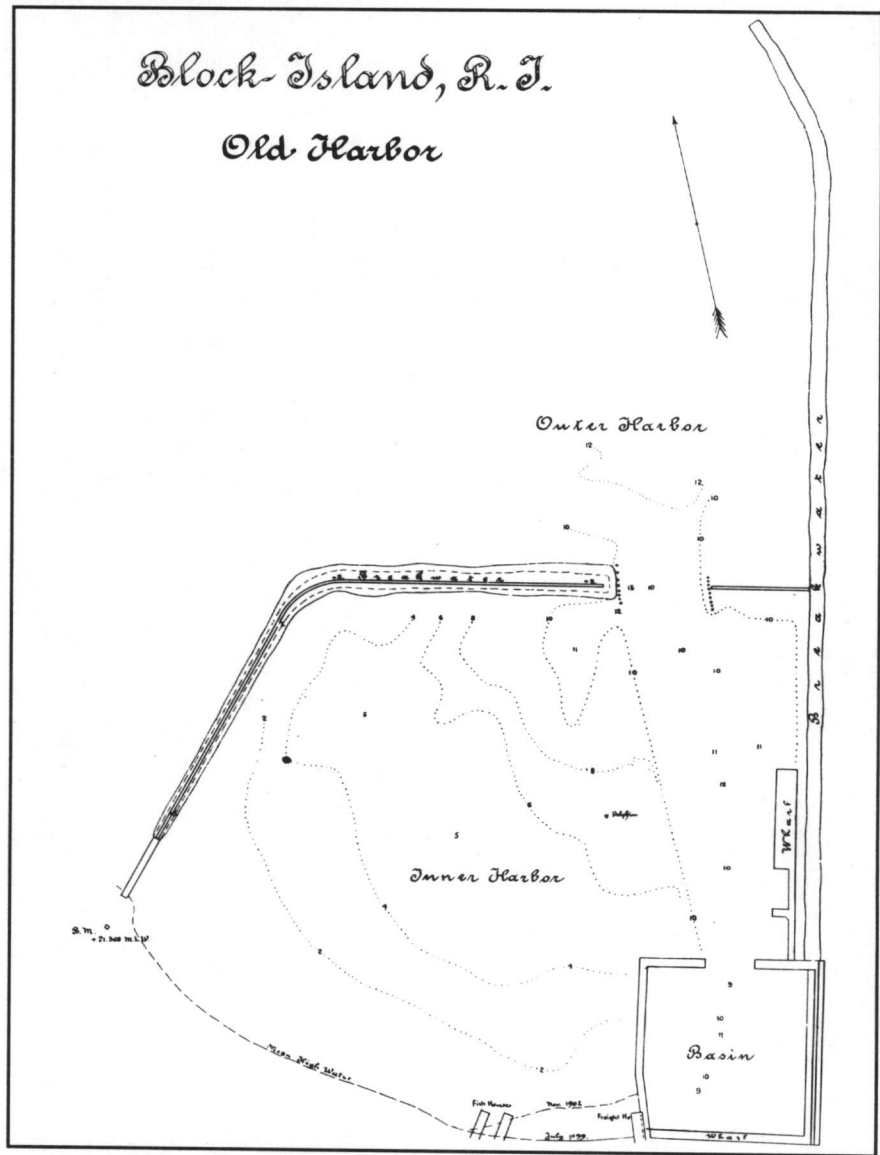
The creation of a harbor enabled the fishing industry to expand. Larger vessels were given access to the Island and fishing expeditions were able to go farther out to sea for longer periods of time. Cod and bluefish constituted the bulk of the commercial catch. Block Island cod acquired a reputation for excellence, surpassing the competition from Newfoundland in freshness and flavor.

The completion of Government Harbor spurred nearby commercial development. The loosely organized town center on the south side of the Great Salt Pond, never a cohesive core, was quickly abandoned in favor of the new district around the harbor. In the 1870s and 1880s the streets around the harbor began to fill with stores and institutional buildings. By the turn of the twentieth century, this area was the thriving commercial heart of the town. More significantly, the improvements introduced a new era of tourism for Block Island. Steamer service between Newport to the northeast and between New London and Norwich to the northwest soon swelled the island's summer population from one thousand to three thousand. A surge of new construction began in the 1870s to accommodate these visitors.

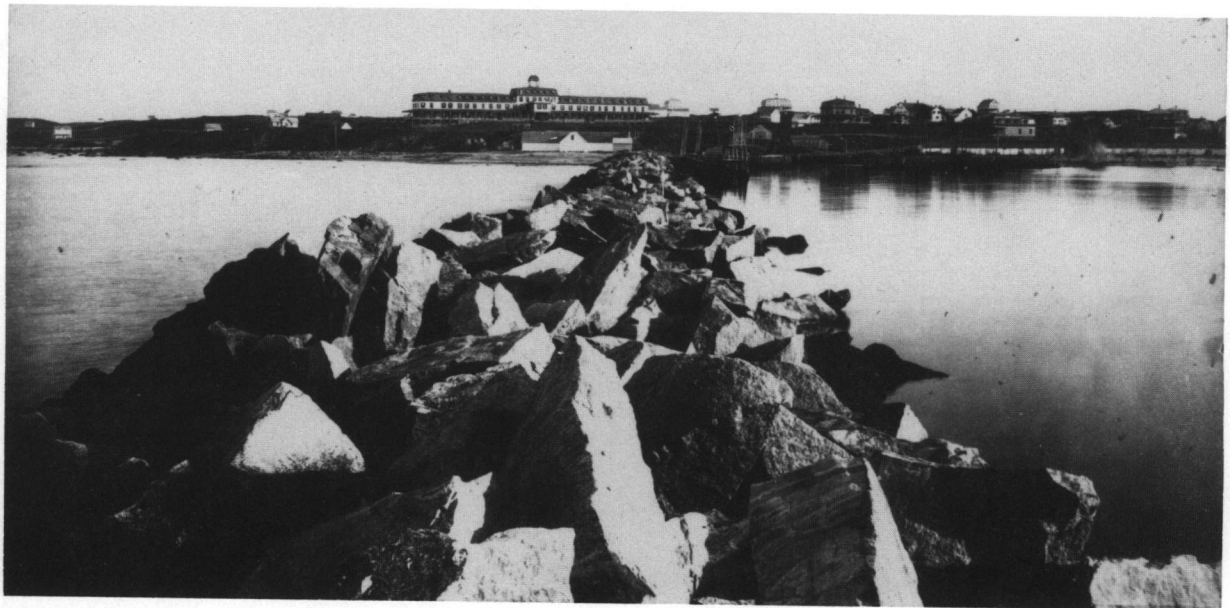
Summer colony development on Block Island, like that of most spots along the New England coast, follows a generally sequential pattern of boarding houses, hotels, and private summer cottages. The three phases often overlap, particularly in places like Block Island, where such development is intense and caters to a broad spectrum of holidaymakers. On the one hand, at the larger hotels the guests attended sophisticated entertainments and dressed for dinner. At the less expensive boarding houses, recreational activities were more informal and less structured.

The effects of the phases of boarding houses, hotels, and cottages on physical development vary considerably: boarding often occurred in existing houses and consequently effects fewer and less noticeable changes in building patterns. The construction of hotels and summer cottages, however, introduced new forms.

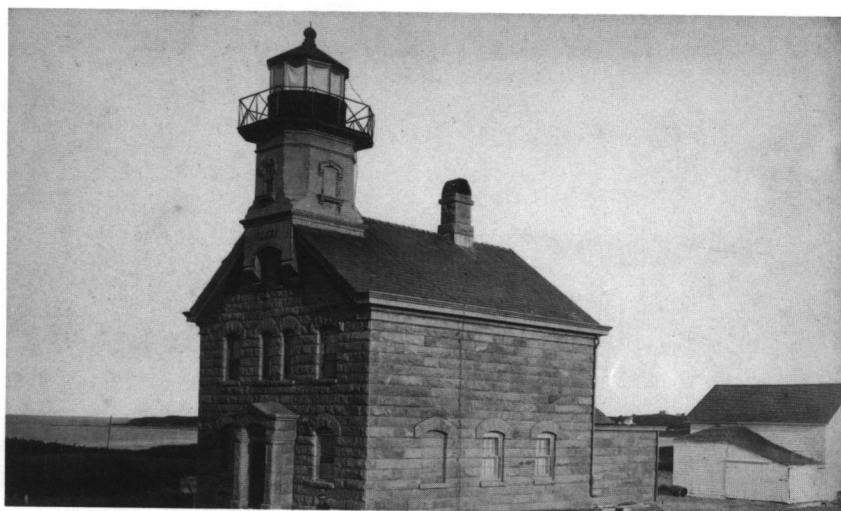
Old Harbor, 1903. Map by Colonel Chas. R. Suter, Corps of Engineers. Map showing Outer Harbor, Inner Harbor, Basin and Breakwater.



Breakwater. Courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society. View south, along rip-rap granite breakwater to Ocean View Hotel, which was destroyed by fire in 1966.



*North Light (1867), Sandy Point. View from southeast showing lighthouse and setting. Fourth structure on site, it was manned until 1955 and lighted until 1970.*



*The West Side Life Saving Station (1872), Cooneymus Road. Courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society. 1890 photograph. Original appearance before renovation for a residence.*

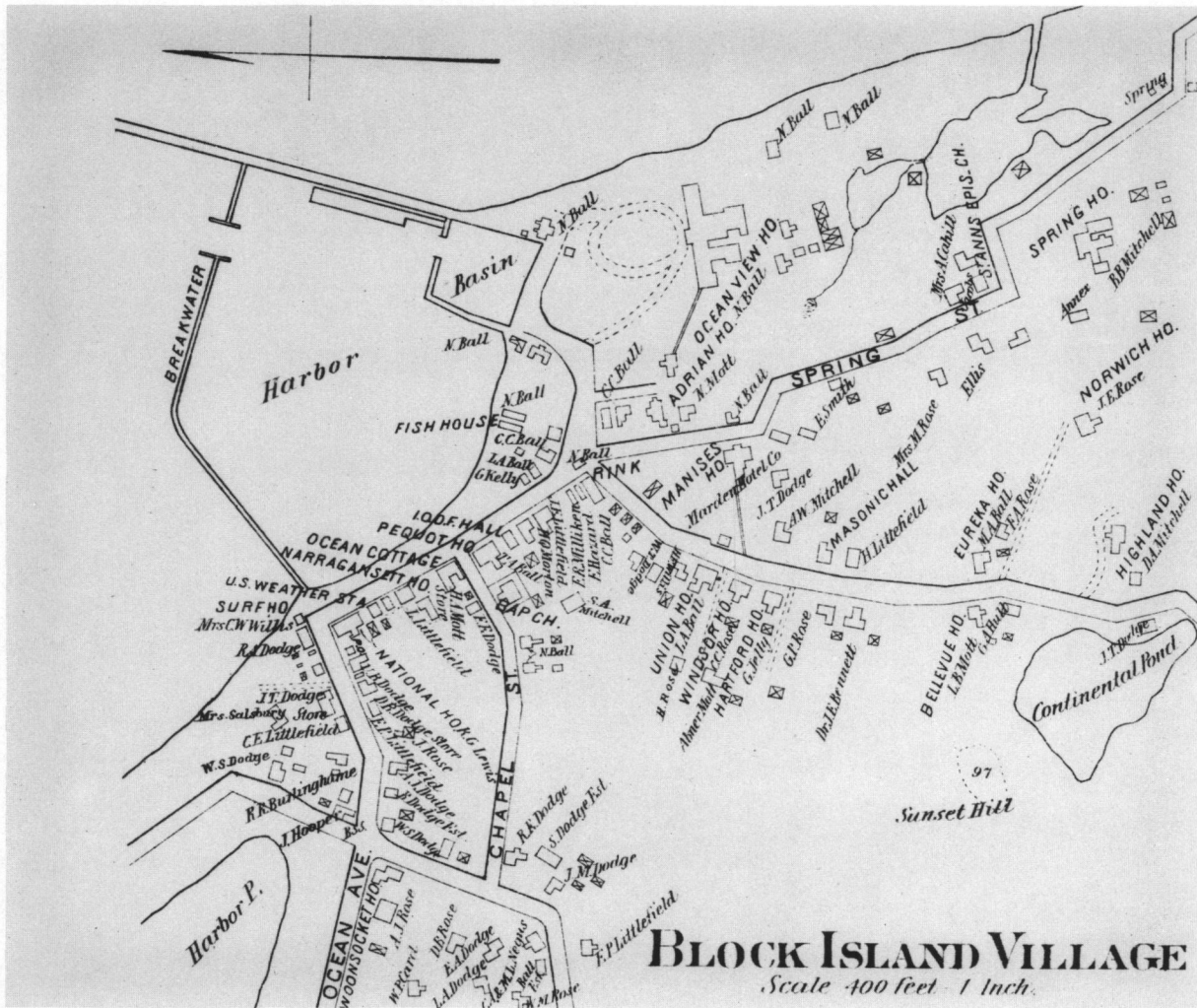


*Fresnel Lens, South East Light (1874). Photograph by Gerald F. Abbott, M.D. This rotating lens was made in Paris in 1880.*



*Southeast Light (1874), South East Light Road. Courtesy of Rhode Island Historical Society. Stereoptican view. Built for \$75,000, this landmark rises over 200 feet above the Atlantic, and needs to be moved to preserve it from severe cliff erosion.*





Block Island Village, 1895 map,  
 Courtesy of Rhode Island  
 Historical Society. Everts &  
 Richards, Philadelphia. Detail  
 showing location of most of hotels  
 and boarding houses standing at  
 this period.





*Willis Store and Surf Hotel (1876),  
Water Street and Dodge Street.  
Courtesy of Rhode Island  
Historical Society, view c. 1890.*



*Spring House (1877), Spring  
Street. Courtesy of Rhode Island  
Historical Society, view c. 1890.*



*Pequot House (1882), Water  
Street. Courtesy of Rhode Island  
Historical Society, view c. 1890.*



*Highland House (1880), High  
Street. Courtesy of Rhode Island  
Historical Society, view c. 1890.*



*Central House (c. 1890), head of  
Beach Avenue. Courtesy of Rhode  
Island Historical Society, view  
c. 1890.*



*Connecticut House (c. 1880),  
Connecticut Avenue. Courtesy of  
Rhode Island Historical Society,  
view c. 1890.*

Hotel construction increased dramatically in the 1870s. Despite the depressed economy following the Panic of 1873, the lure of the newly accessible island created a building boom unusual for the times. Existing hostelrys were expanded, and a number of new ones were constructed in the vicinity of the harbor: the Ocean View (1873-74), New Shoreham (1875), Manisses (1876), Surf (1876), Spring House (1877), Norwich House (1878), Pequot House (1882), Union (1883) Bellevue (1885), and New National (1888). By the turn of the century, island investment in hotels was estimated at \$400,000, and—importantly—most hotels were owned by islanders. The most ambitious of these was the Ocean View, built and owned by Nicholas Ball and opened just as regular steamer service became available: the three-story, mansard-roof structure stretched over three hundred feet along the Cliff Walk just south of the Government Harbor and provided rooms for five hundred visitors. Others ranged in size down to the twenty-room Manisses.

A third phase of summer colony development began in the 1880s with the construction of summer cottages. Most summer cottages were built by individuals for their own use; they were scattered across the island and often sited to exploit water views. There is no physical evidence of extensive planned development—like Buttonwoods in Warwick—although one corporation, The Block Island Land and Improvement Company, was chartered in 1885 for "buying or building and maintaining a place or places of recreation and sojourn..." on the island.<sup>8</sup> The activities of this organization deserve further study. The only planned group of buildings is the Vail Cottages, a sanatorium: Dr. Abby Vail of New York bought sixteen acres on the south side of the island in 1884 and the following year erected three cottages, one for herself and two for patients. The complex grew in the late nineteenth century with the addition of cottages and, in 1893, a hotel.

The new development in the second half of the century broke with island building traditions in two ways. Obviously, it introduced new building types: summer houses, hotels, and commercial buildings. Further, it introduced the island to mainstream, stylish American architecture. The buildings erected on the island before the second half of the nineteenth century employed traditional forms and details; little contact with the mainland and little change in the way life was lived occasioned neither need nor desire to modify building patterns. Any change in vernacular architecture was largely due to functional requirements rather than assumption of an external aesthetic. Beginning in the 1870s, however, Block Island was increasingly introduced to national and international architectural trends and was thus less completely reliant on vernacular tradition. Moreover, not only were the architectural ideas imported to the island, but the building components themselves were also brought over on the steamships that regularly plied the waters between the treeless island and the mainland. Of course the vernacular tradition continued into the twentieth century, particularly for modest dwellings and utilitarian structures.

Nineteenth-century American architecture is a rich tapestry of sources and styles. Some forms and styles were used for almost every type of building, while the application of other styles was more circumscribed. The relatively small number of building types on Block Island thus limited its range of new architectural design choices. Several important late nineteenth-century design trends occur often on Block Island and deserve consideration.

Picturesque informality became a guiding principle in the design of suburban and rural American domestic architecture beginning in the 1830s. In many important ways the picturesque aesthetic continued to inform the design of many country houses well

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<sup>8</sup>*Charter and By-Laws of the Block Island Land and Improvement Society*, Providence (1887): 4.

into the twentieth century: while stylistic sources vary from decade to decade, as a group these houses are characteristically rambling, asymmetrical compositions, and their mass and detail have a delightfully fragmented quality.

The range of picturesque dwellings on Block Island is predictably narrower than that found in nearby Newport<sup>9</sup> but still remarkable in its variety, especially in contrast to the longstanding vernacular traditions. The variety resulted from changing fashion and the infusion of summer residents from other parts of the northeast: Boston, Philadelphia, New York, Connecticut. Within the range, several types are identifiable.

The island's earliest picturesque house<sup>10</sup> was built—appropriately enough—the year steamer service began, in 1874. Darius B. Dodge's Gothic-inspired cottage follows in the rural Gothic mode introduced in houses like Richard Upjohn's George Noble Jones House, "Kingscote" (1839) in Newport and disseminated by publications like Andrew Jackson Downing's *Cottage Residences* (1842 et seq.) and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850 et seq.). Downing promoted houses like Dodge's, "...characterized mainly by pointed gables," because "their outlines are highly picturesque and harmonious with nature."<sup>11</sup> And while this house was built for a native, year-round resident, it initiated a new direction for Block Island architecture. The circumstances of its construction further suggest the eagerness of islanders to create stylish new architecture and to move into a cultural mainstream.

Medieval-inspired forms remained popular for country-house use through the nineteenth century. The inspiration for later examples encompassed an ever broader range of sources, including rural vernacular buildings of Switzerland, France, Germany, and Scandinavia. David Van Nostrand's house, "Innisfail" (1884)<sup>12</sup> recalls these sources, especially as interpreted in Newport summer cottages of the 1860s and 1870s by Richard Morris Hunt. The turreted profile and the braced posts on the sweeping veranda of Everett D. Barlow's House (1886) fall within this category.

The second picturesque style, also much touted by Downing was the bracketed mode, whose character is "...derived mainly from the bold projection of the roof, supported by ornamental brackets, and from the employment of brackets for supports in various other parts of the building."<sup>13</sup> Derived ultimately from Italian vernacular architecture, the bracketed mode was eminently adaptable for American use. Downing emphasized the utility of wide roof overhangs in shading the upper story in summer and recommended its use in warm climates. The bracketed mode enjoyed great popularity in the second half of the nineteenth century, and several examples rose on Block Island. The salient details of the Amazon Littlefield House (1889) are precisely those Downing stressed. Bracketed detailing was also applied to a number of otherwise vernacular buildings, as simply copied or readily available details became part of the island's local building tradition.

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<sup>9</sup>The influence of Newport's late nineteenth century architecture on that of Block Island remains to be examined; however, some influence by that concentration of internationally important buildings must be assumed.

<sup>10</sup>The *Providence Evening Bulletin* on 9 June 1874 described the house as one "...which really makes more pretensions to 'style' than any other private residence upon our island."

<sup>11</sup>Andrew Jackson Downing, *Cottage Residences*, 9th ed. (Newburgh, N. Y., 1873), p. 23.

<sup>12</sup>The act of naming a house itself has significance. Named houses first began to appear on Block Island in the 1880s, and their presence suggests a new attitude toward the building.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 89.

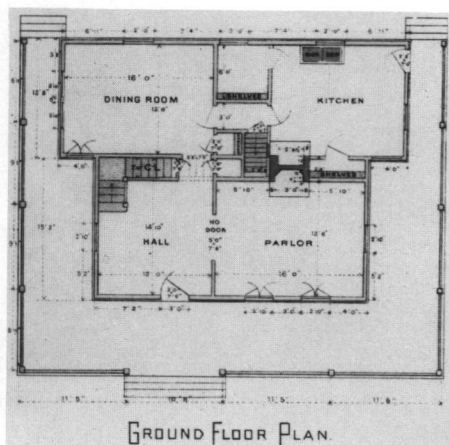
*Darius B. Dodge House  
(1874) Dodge Street.  
Courtesy of Block Island  
Historical Society. A Gothic-  
inspired cottage, built for a  
fisherman who became manager  
of the Pequot House.*



*David Van Norstrand House/  
Innisfail (1888). Photograph by  
Judith Watts. A combined  
Swiss and Queen Anne type,  
similar to informal Newport  
cottages.*



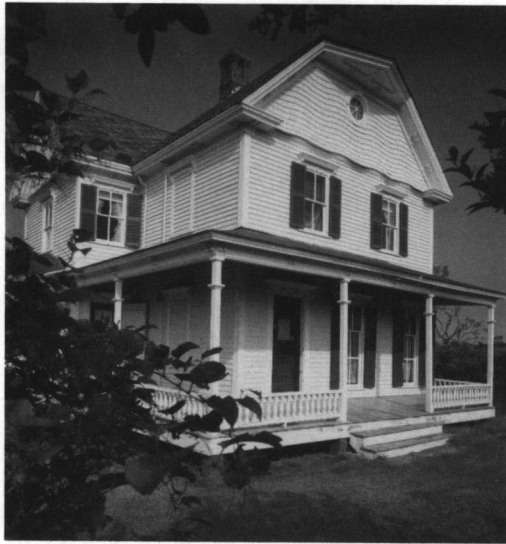
*Edward D. Barlow House/  
Mohegan Cottage (1886);  
Charles E. Miller, New York,  
architect. Floor plan.*



*Edward D. Barlow House/  
Mohegan Cottage (1886);  
Charles E. Miller, New York,  
architect. Drawing in Scientific  
American, Architects and  
Builders Edition, September 1886.*



*Captain Amazon Littlefield House (1888-89). Photograph by Judith Watts. A cruciform-plan house, based on rural New York designs.*

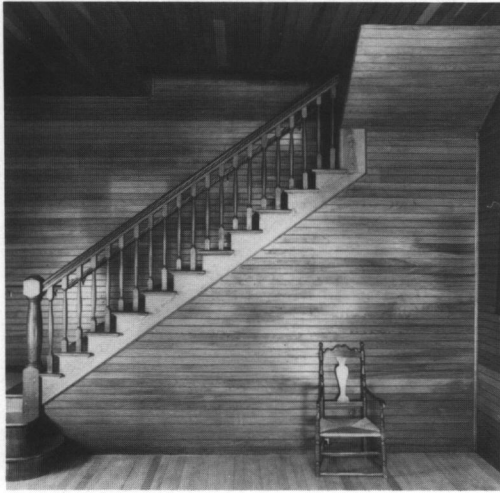


*Charles F. Fairfield House/Lakeside (1893). Photograph by Judith Watts. Built as a summer house for a Springfield, Massachusetts florist.*



*Captain Mark L. Potter House/Poplar Lodge (1901). Photograph by Judith Watts.*





*Interior of Ninicroft Lodge, showing cypress paneling and staircase. Photograph by Judith Watts.*



*L.V. Maltby House/Ninicroft Lodge (1904). Photograph by Judith Watts. Built for the proprietor of the Continental Hotel, Philadelphia.*



*Julius Deming Perkins House/Bayberry Cottage (1897). A sophisticated design, built as part of the Vail Cottage complex for a Connecticut state senator.*



*United States Weather Bureau Station (1903), Beach Avenue. Photograph by Gerald F. Abbott, M.D. A neo-classical standardized governmental design, built to replace an earlier station and in service until 1950.*

A third group that falls under the picturesque rubric shares its general characteristics but lacks historicizing forms and details. Such houses are cognates of the shingled mode, as developed by McKim, Mead & White—especially in Newport—and have an affinity with the naturalistic Craftsman-like houses built in rustic settings, like the Adirondacks. In its most reduced form, the picturesque quality derives from simple geometry, ample porches, and shingled wall cover, like Charles Fairfield's "Lakeside" (1893) or the Mark Potter House (1900-01). More sophisticated examples include Deming Perkins's "Bayberry Cottage" (1897), which relies on complex, interlocking geometrical forms, and L. V. Maltby's "Ninicroft Lodge" (1904), distinguished by a rough, rock-clad first story surrounded by a deep, circumferential porch and capped by a large, sweeping roof.

The predominance of the picturesque mode for Block Island summer houses is remarkable. The classical revivals of the late nineteenth century found little acceptance here. Only the domestic-scale United States Weather Station (1903) varies from the picturesque norm, and its appearance is the result of the use of a standardized neoclassical design. The conditions which usually encouraged classical-derived architecture were absent. The island had few extravagantly rich summer residents who built large Renaissance-inspired houses, like "The Breakers" in Newport.<sup>14</sup> As the Colonial Revival emerged, other towns, like Litchfield, Connecticut or Little Compton, sought design refuge in their pasts. With little remaining from its early years, Block Island lacked local source material that often provided inspiration for new design in the Colonial Revival mode. Late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century summer houses here, more than in other summer places, tended away from colonial- and Renaissance-inspired classicism and toward the picturesque informality that characterized the quality of summer life here.

Block Island's hotels of the period typify seaside New England resort architecture. Most of them are white, rectangular buildings two or three stories high with wide front porches and mansard roofs; prominent cupolas or projecting pavilions are centered on the long facades of many of them. The double-slope mansard roof, imported from Second Empire France, was coming into fashion in the 1860s and 1870s, just as Block Island began to develop as a summer resort, and its use continued here until the early twentieth century. While many other seaside resorts—like Narragansett—have lost the ample, mansard-roof hotels that characterized nineteenth-century watering spots, Block Island retains many examples.

The mansard roof introduced to Block Island in its hotels was also adapted for use in residential architecture. Captain Lemuel A. Dodge's house (1879) continues a standard island form, five bays wide and two bays deep, and incorporates both picturesque detail in its full width front porch and bracketed eaves and a stylish bell-cast mansard roof. The form was also grafted onto existing buildings, like Gideon Rose's house, later known as "Woonsocket House"; its use here was surely to change the old building's image to advertise its new life as a boarding house.

At century's end, a final improvement was made to navigation. Excavation of a breachway into the Great Salt Pond began in 1894, and by 1898 the New Harbor was accessible to ships, and a new wharf had been constructed on its south side. By the early years of the twentieth century Block Island was largely transformed:

Farming and fishing were practically the sole industries of the people up to the middle of the last century, when the beauty of the place and

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<sup>14</sup>Only the vast folly built by Mr. and Mrs. Edward Searles followed classical design canons; it was little used and seems always to have been regarded as an island oddity.

its unparalleled hygienic attractions began to draw attention to it as a summer resort and it is celebrated all over the world, and the thirty or more hotels, and the cottages of its summer residents, add an important factor to the old industries.

...the Island no longer needs the aid of legend or poetry to bring people to its shores; it is...a Mecca for the invalid in mind or body, and a delightful summer home for those who would recuperate from the maddening whirl of modern life.<sup>15</sup>

And just as the island settled into a pattern of subsistence fishing and farming after its colonization in the seventeenth century, so too did it settle into a new rhythm of life as a summer resort.

## WAXING, WANING, AND WAXING: 1900-

Block Island's first heyday as a summer resort occurred during the first two decades of the twentieth century. Following this peak, summer trade continued on the island but at increasingly reduced levels, particularly among those who came to stay in hotels or boarding houses. The island's agricultural and maritime base eroded too, and its year-round population declined from approximately 1500 in 1900 to a low of 489 in 1970; by 1980 it had risen only to 610. Construction and tourist activity slowed considerably during the middle years of the twentieth century, only to revive in its last quarter, about a century after the first waves of holidaymakers stepped off the steamers at Government Harbor.

With the gradual decline in coastal sea disasters that followed the rise in steam navigation, the need for the Life-saving Service became less acute. In 1915, the Service was subsumed by the newly created U.S. Coast Guard, but activities at the life-saving stations continued unchanged for some time. The construction of a modern Coast Guard station at Cormorant Point on the Great Salt Pond in 1935 marked the end of active service in the old life-saving stations, though the shores of Block Island continued to be patrolled through World War II. The new Coast Guard station was located on the New Harbor channel where its crew could monitor harbor traffic and obtain a still water launching site for the rescue boat. The station and boathouse continue in use by the Coast Guard today.

The hotel business thrived during the early twentieth century. In 1900, the island counted twenty-two hotels with a combined capacity for almost 2,500 guests. The numbers of both hotels and beds rose during these years and peaked just before World War I, when nearly thirty hotels could accommodate over 3,100 guests, and the island counted as many as 56,000 visitors annually.<sup>16</sup>

Fishing flourished from the creation of Government Harbor until the mid-twentieth century, when the hurricane of 1938 followed by World War II precipitated its collapse as a major endeavor. After the war, the State invested heavily in the development of Point Judith as fishing port, undercutting attempts to rebuild the island fleet. Today there remain a few boats that regularly use the island but, for the most part, fishing boats have given way to recreational boating. What remains provides a visual reminder

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<sup>15</sup>Charles E. Perry, "Block Island's Story," *New England Magazine*, July 1904, pgs. 518, 524.

<sup>16</sup>William J. Murtagh, *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*, (Pittstown, New Jersey, 1988, p. 128.



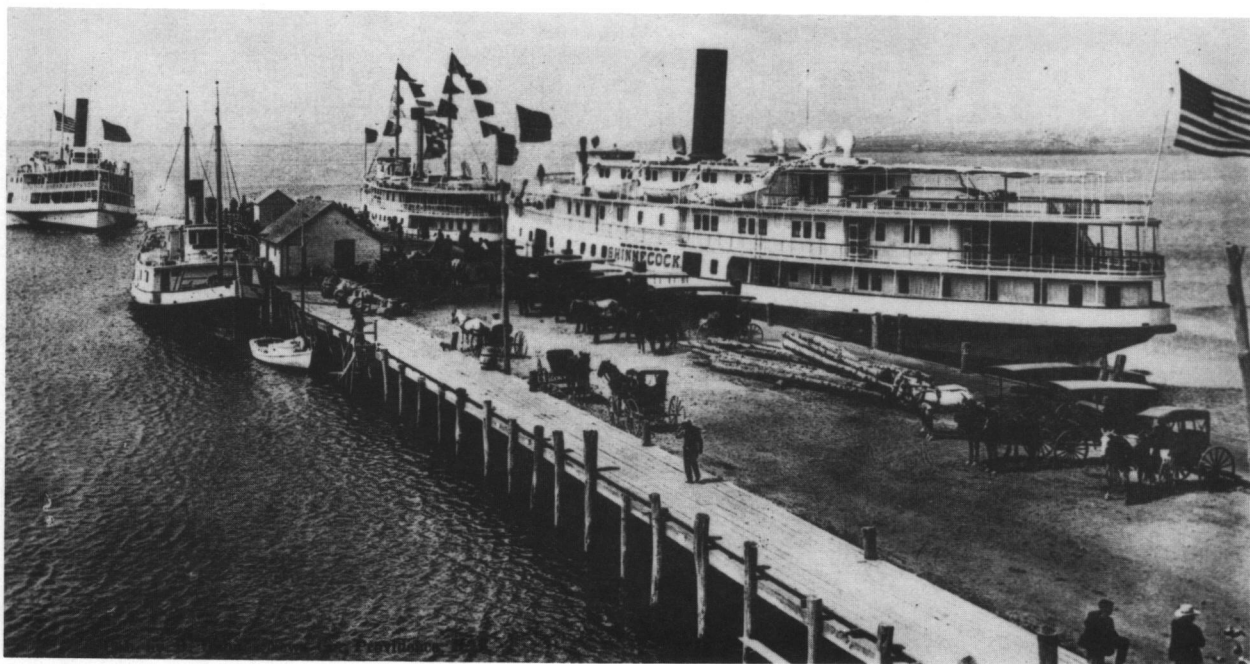
*Gideon Rose House/  
Woonsocket House (ca. 1820,  
1871). Courtesy of Rhode Island  
Historical Society. Mansard  
roof added for use as a  
boarding house, now home of  
the Block Island Historical  
Society.*



*View of West (New) Harbor.  
Courtesy of Rhode Island  
Historical Society, c. 1900  
postcard.*



*Steamboat Landing at New  
Harbor. Courtesy of Rhode Island  
Historical Society, c. 1900  
postcard. View of dock  
(Payne's Dock), after 1898 when  
the harbor became accessible  
for regular steamer service and  
large ships.*



*Breakwater showing  
Ballard's Dance Pavillion.  
Courtesy of Rhode Island  
Historical Society,  
c. 1900 postcard.*



*Horse Car on Water Street.  
Courtesy of Rhode Island  
Historical Society, c. 1900  
postcard.*



*Water Street at Old Harbor.  
Courtesy of Rhode Island  
Historical Society, c. 1900  
photograph. View west from  
Littlefield's Store past the  
enlarged Pequot House (1882)  
to the New National Hotel  
(1888) and the Surf Cottage  
(1876) at the corner of Water  
Street and Dodge Street.*



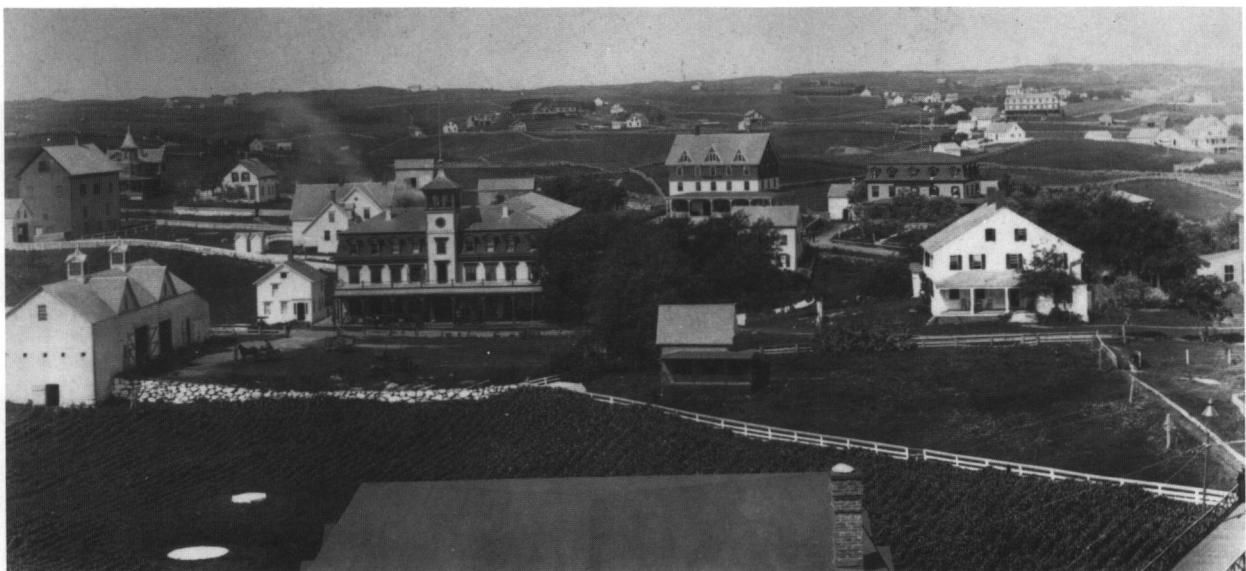
*Bernal H. Dodge House  
Blue Dory Inn (c. 1870),  
Dodge Street. Rehabilitated  
using federal tax incentives.*



*Cassius Clay Ball House  
(c. 1887), Water Street. 1974  
photograph. View north, showing  
cast-iron statue, Rebecca at the  
Well, in the foreground.*



*View of Manisses Hotel (1876)  
and Union House (c. 1880).  
Courtesy of Rhode Island  
Historical Society, c. 1900  
photograph. View west from  
roof of the Ocean View Hotel  
(burned 1966) across cornfield  
to rolling landscape.*



of the decades when fishing boats and fish houses dominated a simpler harbor. In their place there are passenger boat ramps, a dock, and buildings which cater to visitors.

The decline in hotel trade began around the time of World War I. Between 1915 and 1920, the number of hotels dropped from twenty-seven to thirteen, and their combined capacity was cut by a third, to approximately 2,000. The decline continued through the 1920s, as social patterns changed dramatically, and intensified during the Depression, which most affected the clientele of hotels and boarding houses. World War II further restricted traveling, and by 1950 many of the large hotels were closed or little used.

Block Island's summer house owners continued to return annually as their situation was little affected by the decline in hotel and boarding house trade. But the dearth of summer houses built between 1910 and the 1950s suggests that the island no longer attracted numbers of new summer residents. Its image was clearly suffering, as suggested in the late 1940s by a Fishers Island summer resident:

On a clear day I could see the people on Block Island drinking martinis...if they drink martinis on Block Island. They used to, you know. Block Island used to be very fashionable.<sup>17</sup>

Little was built during the middle years of the twentieth century. A weak economy and declining population created little demand for additional buildings or structures. The consolidated school, completed in 1933, was a significant construction project.

During the 1950s and 1960s Block Island began to show signs of revival. The airport, first suggested in the mid-1930s, was completed in 1950; sited on a hundred-foot-high plateau at the island's center, it made the island more accessible from the mainland by reducing travel time from over an hour to fifteen or twenty minutes. In 1954, the state built a bathhouse at Crescent Beach. Block Island Race Week, instituted in 1965, signaled the place's growing popularity among sailors and has attracted increasing numbers of participants, who find the island an easy day sail and make use of extensive docking facilities in the New Harbor.

Since the early 1970s Block Island's fortunes as a summer place have revived considerably. Construction of new summer houses increased dramatically during that decade. Further, a number of the old farm houses and early summer houses have been restored or remodeled for summer use; even the 1886 Life Saving Station on the west side has been recycled as a summer house. Changes in the federal income tax code since 1976 have encouraged some renovations of commercial properties; owners of such properties may now be eligible for tax credits in certain circumstances. A number of the hotels have been rehabilitated, beginning with the Manisses in the mid-1970s and including the Eureka, the National, the Blue Dory, the Spring House, and the Pequot House, now known as the Harborside Inn. In 1974 the Old Harbor Historic District, encompassing the town center, was added to the State Register and National Register of Historic Places, and in 1982 the Town of New Shoreham created a local historic district at Old Harbor, ensuring that proposed changes to the exterior of the historic buildings are reviewed by the New Shoreham Historic District Commission.

Just as it did a century ago, Block Island is once again flourishing. It attracts increasing numbers of day or weekend visitors as well as residents of Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Connecticut, and New York, who make their summer homes here. The poverty of the mid-twentieth century has been replaced as the island's largest problem:

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<sup>17</sup>Cleveland Armory, *The Last Resorts*, (New York, 1948), p. 135.

overdevelopment is now the island's chief threat. Without careful stewardship of the island's natural and man-made resources, Block Island could well lose those qualities memorialized in verse a century ago:

Circled by waters that never freeze,  
Beaten by billow and swept by breeze  
Lieth the island of Manisees,{sic}

Set at the mouth of the Sound to hold  
The coast lights up on its turret old  
Yellow with moss and sea-fog mould.

Dreary the land when gust and sleet  
At its doors and windows howl and beat,  
And winter laughs at its fires of peat!

But in summer time, when pool and pond,  
Held in the laps of valleys fond,  
Are blue as the glimpses of sea beyond;

When the hills are sweet with the brier-rose,  
And, hid in the warm, sweet dells unclosed  
Flowers the mainland rarely knows;

When boats to their morning fishing go,  
And, held to the wind and slanting low,  
Whitening and darkening the small sails show,—

Then is that lonely island fair;  
And the pale health-seeker findeth there  
The wine of life in its pleasant air.

No greener valleys the sun invite,  
Or smoother beaches no sea-birds light,  
No blue waves shatter to foam more white!<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>John Greenleaf Whittier, "The Palatine," *The Complete Works of John Greenleaf Whittier*, (Boston & New York, 1910), v. 3, p. 8.



*Nathaniel Champlin Farm (early  
19th Century et seq.), off Coast Guard  
Road. Photograph by Judith Watts.*

## THE STATE AND NATIONAL REGISTERS OF HISTORIC PLACES

Block Island is in many ways unique—both visually and historically. Its present form is partly the gift of nature, but is also the result of many decisions made by those who lived here in the past—decisions about where and how to live, how to build, how to worship, how to play. It is axiomatic that Block Island is now a desirable place to live, to visit, to build—much of the island's desirability comes from the well preserved evidence of those who have lived and built here for hundreds of years. The preservation of this evidence—in the houses, farms, hotels, lighthouses, and landscape—is an important goal for those who care about the beauty of Block Island and the quality of life of its residents and visitors.

One of the first steps in the preservation process is the study and evaluation of historic properties to determine if they are eligible for the National Register of Historic Places and the State Register. The National Register is the federal government's official list of properties which are significant in American history and worthy of preservation. In Rhode Island, eligible properties are also listed on the State Register. Properties may be listed in the Registers as individual buildings or as districts which include several buildings. The stringent eligibility criteria for the Registers mandate that candidates for registration be both well preserved (with minimal changes from their important period) and significant (with the ability to document an important aspect of the island's history).

The benefits of registration include recognition of the property's importance and assurance that a professional evaluation of the property has taken place; eligibility for certain financial incentives to preserve and rehabilitate the property, such as grants, loans, tax credits, easement donations, and the like; and assurance that the property will not be altered or demolished by state or federal action without careful consideration.

Listing on the Registers does not require a private property owner to preserve or maintain the property; nor it does not block public projects when these are shown to be in the public interest.

Several properties on Block Island are already listed in the Registers:

Old Harbor Historic District (including all properties within a 2,000-foot radius of the Village Square, at the intersection of Water, High, and Spring Streets)

U.S. Weather Bureau Station, Beach Avenue (Plat 5, lot 114)

Peleg Champlin House, Rodman Pond Lane (Plat 19, lot 39)

North Light, Sandy Point (Plat 1, lot 1)

South East Light, South East Light Road (Plat 8, lot 1)

A number of other properties on Block Island are likely to be eligible for the Registers after further study and evaluation. Given the developmental history of the island outlined in the first section of this report, these properties appear to fall into several categories (see below); the inventory of historic buildings at the end of this report contains further information on many properties which may meet the eligibility criteria for the Registers.

**Early Houses (before 1850):** No buildings remain from Block Island's first century of English settlement, but there are a handful of houses from the second century of settlement. These represent a special treasure for Block Islanders, as they document the nature of life on the island before it became a vacation destination. These early houses are for the most part simple structures, one-and-a-half stories tall, with gable or gambrel roofs. Modest and utilitarian, they represent a longstanding tradition of vernacular building—houses of this type, boxy in form with big center chimneys, were built for decades and form an important part of the characteristic Block Island look.

Some of these houses may be eligible for the Registers. Where a house retains its historic appearance, its form, its plan, its structure, its pattern of fenestration, and at least some of its original finishes (detailing, woodwork, flooring, plaster, etc.), it will qualify for registration.

**Structures Associated with Block Island's Maritime History:** The special relationship of the island and the surrounding sea is documented in a number of buildings and engineering works—lighthouses, piers, breakwaters, harbors, life-saving stations, and a weather station. The old harbor, both lighthouses, and the weather station are already listed on the Registers, recognizing the importance of maritime concerns the history of the island. If additional structures associated with the sea-faring history of the island are located, they may also be eligible if they retain integrity and if their relationship with Block Island's maritime history is clearly demonstrated.

**Farms:** For much of the island's long history Block Island people have been farmers as well as sailors. The patterns of their agricultural practices have determined, in part, the visual quality of the island today—the cleared land, the low scrub growth, the patchwork of fields intersected by lanes and walls. For several hundred years farming was not only a means of livelihood, but a way of organizing the landscape. As a piece of land, a farm is a structured and managed landscape—of gardens, fields, pastures, woodlots. A farm is also a complex of various structures, barns, sheds, cribs, silos, fences, walls, and the like. The working farm is now an exception on Block Island, but in some places on the island the beautiful farming landscape and the agricultural structures remain.

A farm may be eligible for the Registers when it conveys at least partially its historic appearance as an agricultural complex, and includes a house, at least some land which evidences divisions for separate uses, and some dependent buildings.

**Buildings Associated with Block Island as a Resort:** The enormous changes brought to Block Island from the mid-nineteenth century on by the change from relative isolation to a summer resort for vacationers from elsewhere are well documented by some of the island's most important buildings. The construction of boardinghouses, hotels, commercial buildings, and private summer cottages introduced new building forms and types and new patterns of development. In addition, buildings associated with Block Island's history as a resort reflect the introduction of mainstream stylish architectural ideas to the island. The vernacular tradition had continuing vitality, but was now paralleled by the flow of new architectural directions expressed particularly in summer houses.

Buildings associated with Block Island's development as a resort may be eligible for the Registers if they are sufficiently well preserved to evidence their type; if they represent a building form introduced to the island as a result of resort development;



if they retain their mass, form, plan, at least some detail and finish; and if they provide evidence of the introduction of mainstream architectural ideals to the island.

**The Landscape:** On Block Island, more than in most places, the entire assemblage of historic and natural features has great beauty and significance. Isolated buildings and natural features can be singled out, identified, and treated as remarkable, but this approach will miss the most exceptional aspect of Block Island—that the entire environment is a vivid historic landscape of great appeal. Like a palimpsest, the landscape reveals layers of historical use and building, reflecting generations of human activity, and resulting in a remarkable integration of man-made and natural features. The buildings of Block Island—its houses, hotels, stores, lighthouses, as well as its hills, fields, beaches, cliffs, stone walls, lanes, and roads—should be considered as a whole.

Consideration should be given to the entry on the National and State Registers of Block Island in its entirety, so that all the elements of this remarkable place may be identified and evaluated as a whole. This approach will acknowledge the unique integration of natural and manmade features on Block Island, recognize the special, almost seamless, character of the entire island, and suggest that an integrated approach toward historic preservation on the island is the most likely to succeed. Using this approach, a certain number of non-historic structures will inevitably be included in the Registers. However, many of the island's newer structures are remarkable for their sensitivity to the look and feel of the island and are not disruptive to the special character of the place.

## INVENTORY

The inventory is a selective list of sites, structures, objects, buildings, and districts important to an understanding of Block Island's past and sense of place. Properties included have historic and/or architectural significance either in themselves, by their association with important individuals, or as representative examples of common local types. This list is by no means comprehensive, and it does not include archaeological sites. Further information for properties on Block Island is available in the Commission's survey files and at the Block Island Historical Society.

Inventory entries are listed by plat and lot number. The series of plat maps (at a reduced scale) is included to aid in the location of a property in this inventory. The boundaries of the Old Harbor Historic District (entered on the National Register in 1974) are marked on the maps for plats 5, 6, 7, and 8. The boundary of this district should be re-examined to determine if additional properties may be eligible for registration; see the section of this report on the State and National Registers.

Each entry includes the name of the property; significant dates, including date of construction; a brief description; history of the property (when known); and an analysis of its architectural and/or historical significance. Names reflect the original owner or use as well as those of subsequent owners or users whose association with the property is significant. Dates reflect the completion of construction or first occupancy of the property. The architects are given when known. The name, date, and architects are based on exhaustive research by the Block Island Historical Society; sources include deeds, tax records, newspapers, probate records, and maps. Description of the properties is generally limited to the exterior. The history—for many of the properties and particularly for houses—often includes only the names and the occupations (when known) of the owners. When further history of the property is known and important, such information is included.

Properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places are marked with an asterisk [\*]; see also the section of this report on the State and National Registers for recommendations about properties which may be eligible for registration.

## PLAT 1

- 1\* SANDY POINT LIGHT, NOW NORTH LIGHT (1867): A 2 1/2-story, end-gable-roof, foursquare granite structure with principal entrance in the symmetrical north facade, 2-story cast-iron tower and lantern centered on the facade, and a 1-story ell across the rear. The form of this sturdy, rock-face ashlar building, overlooking a section of ocean treacherous for its shifting tides and fog, reinforces its important maritime role. The fourth structure located in this vicinity, it was manned until 1955 and lighted until 1970. Now part of a 28-acre wildlife refuge and bird sanctuary, the building is planned for rehabilitation for museum and interpretive center, a use that will ensure its future preservation.
- 13-2 COXE-HAYDEN HOUSE (1979): Venturi, Rauch & Scott-Brown, architects. Two simple, shingled, 2-story, gable-roof buildings standing at a slight angle to each other and set on a low rise facing west across Sachem Pond. The simplicity of this complex is deceiving: the detail is superb, and the siting is exquisite. Built as a vacation house for Philadelphia residents—thus the choice of the architects—this is the only commission in Rhode Island by this nationally important firm.

## PLAT 2

- 6 JOHN G. SHEFFIELD HOUSE (1880, 1894): John F. Hayes, builder. A square-plan bracketed cottage with a bell-cast mansard roof, symmetrical 3-bay facade, and ell at rear; a rear addition was added in 1894. The interior includes elaborate ogival frames for the bay windows. Outbuildings include a barn and shed. Sheffield (1855-1929) was a member of an old island family. Hayes was a prolific Block Island builder; this was his first commission after returning from an apprenticeship in Newport.
- 10 CAPTAIN EDWARD HAYES HOUSE (1881): John F. Hayes (?), builder. An ample cottage with a high-shouldered mansard roof, symmetrical 5-bay facade, and ell to the right rear; extensive porches, described at the time of completion, have since disappeared. Prominently sited on Clay Head, this house was probably constructed by Hayes's son John F. (1856-1936), who built so many buildings on Block Island in the late 19th century. Another son Samuel (1846-1922) maintained a summer boarding house here in the early 20th century.
- 26 LITTLEFIELD-HAYES HOUSE (ca. 1750 [?]): A shingled cottage with an asymmetrical 5-bay facade and small center chimney. One of the older buildings on the island, this house has long been perceived as one of considerable antiquity. Belonging to Elias Littlefield (1813-87), it became the home of builder John F. Hayes (1856-1936) in 1887.
- 31 BENJAMIN LITTLEFIELD HOUSE (ca. 1851): A small, 1 1/2-story, shingled house, built for Littlefield, a farmer. Builder Anderson C. Rose added the ell, the dormers, and the porch in 1894 for Littlefield's son Frederick. A 1943 concrete bunker on the property functioned as a fire

## PLAT 2 (continued)

control station for guns at Point Judith; the bunker is now attached to an outbuilding.

- 46 CAPTAIN AMAZON LITTLEFIELD HOUSE (1888-89): Daniel Dillon, Jr., carpenter. A staggered-cruciform-plan, 2 1/2-story dwelling with wraparound front porch, bay windows, and a jerkinhead end-gable roof; the only outbuilding is a cross-gable-roof barn. Tradition maintains that Littlefield and his wife, Marantha, saw a similar house while traveling in New York. Its design, reminiscent of those found in late 19th-century pattern-books, clearly breaks with traditional island vernacular forms.

## PLAT 3

- 93 HIRAM ANSEL BALL HOUSE, "COTTAGE FARM" (1889): A. D. Mitchell, builder. A 1 3/4-story dwelling with prominent dormers on the facade, ells on the left rear, and a sweeping porch across the front. While the house follows a traditional island form, its stylish detail surely accounts for its description in 1889 as "a modified Queen Anne type."
- 103 CAPTAIN SAMUEL LITTLEFIELD HOUSE (before 1850): A shingled, 5-bay-facade, center-chimney cottage; outbuildings include a barn built into the hillside and several sheds. While the interior is somewhat altered, it retains an original and unusual staircase with reverse-pitch risers. The house typifies the earliest vernacular island forms.
- 104 CAPTAIN BENJAMIN GARDNER HOUSE (1884): A 1 3/4-story, cross-gable-roof dwelling with trefoil bargeboards on the raking and eaves cornices and on the bay windows and projecting vestibule. Gardner was first officer of the mail steamer *George W. Danielson* from 1880 to 1896; he rented this cottage to Mr L. Houghton, a school teacher.
- 130? SITE OF EDWARD F. SEARLES HOUSE (1887-88): Henry Vaughan, architect. Built for the widow of San Francisco railroad magnate Mark Hopkins and her second husband, the large wooden house was designed after early eighteenth-century English Palladian prototypes. Searles abandoned the house after his wife's death in 1891, and it burned in 1961. Only foundation ruins remain.
- 142 NATHANIEL LITTLEFIELD HOUSE (ca. 1750[?]): A shingled, center-chimney cottage with a prominent ell. Littlefield farmed the extensive land around his house, and his descendants continued to farm and fish here well into the 20th century. The house has been expanded over time, but the property retains its commanding site with rolling meadows and stone walls above Crescent Beach.
- 146 JOHN HAYES, JR. HOUSE (before 1850, 1881): A shingled, 2 1/2-story, center chimney dwelling with a 5-bay facade and late 19th-century ell at the rear; outbuildings include sheds and a privy.

## PLAT 4

- 17 EDNA TOWNE HOUSE, "SHORE ACRES" (1900): Henry K. Littlefield, builder. A 1 3/4-story shingled dwelling with irregular fenestration and a 1-story entrance porch; the simple interior retains its original beaded-wood paneling. Described at the time of its construction as "a plain building with a piazza," it was built as a summer cottage for a resident of Washington, D. C.
- 18 THOMAS MOTT HOUSE (before 1850): A large, stretched, 5-bay-facade dwelling with an off-center chimney and later dormers in the roof; outbuildings include sheds and a gambrel-roof barn. Mott's son Sylvester was active in fishing and coasting; the house remained in his heirs' hands in the late 1980s.
- 21 EZRA C. SMITH HOUSE (1882-83): A 1 3/4-story bracketed house with 5-bay facade, full-width scrollwork front porch, and rear ell. This is a typical late 19th-century island house.
- 38 JOSEPH M. MOTT HOUSE (before 1850, after 1970): Originally a 5-bay-facade, center-chimney dwelling, this shingled house has been expanded by an addition that extends along the wall-plane of the facade. Mott (1818-64) farmed this land, and the property remained in the hands of his heirs until the 1980s.
- 46 CAPTAIN LOREN N. WILLIS HOUSE (ca. 1888, 1902): A 1 3/4-story, T-plan house with scrollwork porches. A typical late 19th-century island house, it was built for Willis (1857-1939), the captain of the fishing schooner *Laura Louise*. When Willis built the addition in 1902 he was master of the schooner *E. H. Snead*. By the 1920s, Willis was renting his house to summer residents.
- 48 EVERETT A. WILLIS HOUSE, "THE BAYSIDE" (1897): A 1 3/4-story house with 5-bay facade, full-width turned-post front porch, and prominent dormers on the facade; outbuildings include a small, cross-gable-roof cottage and a barn. Willis may have pursued maritime pursuits as did two of his brothers; the Willis family advertised the availability of their rooms to summer guests as early as 1909.
- 53 CAPTAIN NATHANIEL L. WILLIS HOUSE (before 1850 et seq.): A 1 3/4-story shingled house with ells at the rear and a sweeping veranda. Willis (1821-91) was a mariner, captain of the *Rhode Island* in the 1870s.
- 64 CHARLES E. PERRY HOUSE, "LAKE VIEW HOUSE," LATER "THE BREAKERS" (1885-86): A 2 1/2-story house with a 5-bay-facade, high cross-gable roof, and wraparound 1-story porch. The rear ell was part of an older building on this site, moved and reoriented when this house was built. The building is well within vernacular island design. Perry originally used this as a boarding school in the winter months and a boarding house in the summer; in 1886, he had twelve pupils. Perry also served as local editor of *Mid-Ocean*, the summer newspaper published by the Newport *Mercury*. Perry first opened the building as "Lake View House" in 1891; it was noted for its "hard wood sets, Bliss springs and hair mattresses."
- 70 DAVID VAN NOSTRAND HOUSE, "INNISFAIL" (1888): A 2-story, T-plan dwelling with wraparound porches, grouped windows, oriel windows

#### PLAT 4 (continued)

on the 2nd story, jerkinhead-gable roof, and shamrock cresting. This *cottage ome* was described at the time of its completion as "combined Swiss and Queen Anne," and it very much follows in the footsteps of informal Newport cottages, like the Thomas Gold Appleton House (1870) by Richard Morris Hunt. The word "Innisfail" is a literary allusion to Ireland as the island of destiny; no doubt Van Nostrand considered Block Island in general and this house specifically to be his particular destiny.

- 72 CHARLES F. FAIRFIELD HOUSE, "LAKESIDE" (1893): A 1 3/4-story house with jerkinhead-cross-gable roof and encircling porch (now enclosed on one corner). Fairfield, a Springfield, Massachusetts florist, built this as a summer residence; it was sold at mortgagee's sale in 1904. Also on the property is a 1 3/4-story, jerkinhead-gable-roof dwelling with wide wraparound porch.
- 74 SIMON R. BALL HOUSE (ca. 1895): A 1 3/4-story dwelling with prominent gabled dormers on the facade and a wraparound porch with scrollwork brackets.

#### PLAT 5

- 21 DR. C. H. HADLEY HOUSE (ca. 1883): A 2 1/2-story, T-plan dwelling with a wraparound porch, patterned shingle work in the gable ends, and a 3 1/2-story tower with steep pyramidal roof in one angle of the T. This is one of the more imposing late 19th-century houses on the island. Hadley wrote the pamphlet "Block Island as a Resort for Invalids," which promoted the island's salubrious qualities. In 1887, he sold his practice to Dr. J. C. Champlin and removed to Brooklyn.
- 59 L. V. MALBY HOUSE, "NINICROFT LODGE" (1904): A splendid summer house: the broad gable roof with kicked-out eastern slope and prominent dormers sweeps over the inset circumferential porch and beach-stone-clad first story; the interior is paneled with cypress. Maltby was proprietor of the Continental Hotel in Philadelphia when he built this house; he retired in 1905.
- 60 GEORGE W. WILLIS HOUSE (ca. 1887): A bell-cast-mansard cottage with a circumferential porch, probably a later addition. Its form is interesting in counterpoint to the adjacent "Ninicroft Lodge."
- 69-1 SAMUEL D. MOTT HOUSE, later LAKE SHORE DINING HALL, THEN NARRAGANSETT HOTEL (before 1800, 1890s, et seq.): The oldest building in this complex is a center-chimney, 2 1/2-story dwelling dating from at least the second half of the eighteenth century. A 2 1/2-story, mansard-roof hotel with a wraparound-porch, a large 1-story rear addition, and sunbonnet gables in each of the four sides of the roof. The father of Samuel D. Mott (1811-1888) built this house, and Samuel D. Mott, Jr., (1841-1908) first operated a dinner hall here in 1896. The hotel first opened in 1912, but surely was built earlier; while the mansard-roof format is often used for island hotels, its use that late seems exceedingly retardataire.

## PLAT 5 (continued)

- 75-1 CAPTAIN MARTIN VAN BUREN BALL HOUSE (1892-93 et seq.): J. Frank Hayes, builder. A 2 1/2-story, off-center-chimney dwelling with a 5-bay facade, bracketed raking and eaves cornices, and a bracketed, scrollwork wraparound porch; the porch is now partially enclosed, and 1st-story facade windows have been replaced with tripartite picture windows. Ball (1839-1926) was long involved with island farming and maritime activities: as an owner of the steamer *G. W. Danielson* he carried the mail to Block Island from Newport for over 25 years.
- 79 "PLEASANT VIEW COTTAGE," THE WILLIAM PITT BALL HOUSE (1884-85): J. Frank Hayes, builder. A 2 1/2-story dwelling with a full-width front porch (which originally nearly encircled the house), double bay window on the west, and a large, original ell; a 4-story tower on the west was destroyed by the 1938 hurricane. Ball (1835-1900) served on the town council and as tax assessor. Mr. and Mrs. Ball built this for their "declining years of a life of worthy toil."
- 81 DISTRICT 4 SCHOOL, "OLD CENTER SCHOOL HOUSE" (1877): A much altered, end-gable roof building with later addition across the facade.
- 92 GILES P. DUNN HOUSE (ca. 1900?): A. R. Ball, architect. A 2 1/2-story house with off-center chimney, asymmetrical 5-bay facade, and full-width front porch; its form is typical of late 19th-century island houses. Giles (1869-1953) was a fisherman, but in 1904 he turned to mercantile ventures, first owning fish markets and later investing in island hotels.
- 93 JOHN A. MOTT HOUSE (ca. 1884): A 2 1/2-story, 5-bay-facade dwelling with paired interior chimneys; set into the hillside, it has an exposed basement on the facade and a 2-tier, full-width front porch. Outbuildings include a large barn and a shed. The form of this house is typical for late 19th-century island houses, but its siting is unusual.
- 114\* UNITED STATES WEATHER BUREAU STATION (1903): Harding & Upham (Washington, D. C.), architects. A boxy, 2-story building with a full-width paired-column front porch, 3-bay facade and center entrance, 3-bay side elevations, pilaster strips at the corners, and a flat roof surrounded by a turned balustrade. Built to replace an earlier station, which burned in 1902, this served as the meteorological observatory and observer's residence for forty-six years; the Weather Service vacated this building for an office at the new airport in 1950, and this became a summer house. The building's formal, classicizing appearance was an attempt on the part of the Chief of the Weather Bureau to bolster public respect for the service and its forecasts.
- 121 ORLANDO F. WILLIS HOUSE (late 19th century): A 1 3/4-story house with full-width bracketed front porch, prominent dormers on the facade, and a full-height ell at rear. This is a typical, late 19th-century island house. Willis (1857-1927) followed maritime pursuits in his youth but by 1912 was listed as a poultry man.

## PLAT 6

- 1\* GIDEON ROSE HOUSE, "WOONSOCKET HOUSE," NOW BLOCK ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY (ca. 1820, 1871): A 2 1/2-story, mansard-roof dwelling with a full-width front porch, ell at the rear, and a cupola centered on the roof. Originally a small cottage, it was substantially enlarged, probably just before it opened as a boarding house in the summer of 1871. Since the mid-1940s it has been the home of the historical society.
- 2.2\* BENJAMIN ROSE HOUSE (late 19th century): A typical island house, 1 3/4 stories high with a 5-bay facade, full-width front porch, and two symmetrical, prominent, dormers; nearby is a small spring house built into the side of the hill.
- 7\* WILLIAM P. CARD HOUSE (ca. 1880): A 1 3/4-story, end-gable-roof dwelling with full-width front porch, 3-bay facade, prominent dormers on the side elevations, pierced bargeboards, and an ell at the rear.
- 8\* CAPTAIN LEMUEL A. DODGE HOUSE (1879): A boxy, mansard-roof cottage with full-width front porch, 5-bay facade, and bracketed cornices. Dodge (1856-1906) was a successful fisherman and owned the island's first fishing schooner, the *Hattie Rebecca*, which he purchased in 1875.
- 9\* CAPTAIN EDWIN A. DODGE HOUSE (1879): A mansard-roof cottage with a 5-bay facade (with bay window to one side), full-width front porch, bracketed cornice, gable-roof dormers, and one-story ell at rear. Dodge (1851-1938) was a swordfisherman, captain of the steamer *Ocean View*.
- 11\* MORRIS A. AND CHARLES NEGUS HOUSE (1888-89): A 2 1/2-story house with a 5-bay facade, wraparound porch with scrollwork brackets, and paired brackets on the raking and eaves cornices. Morris (1859-1932) and Charles (1860-1932) were blacksmiths when they built this two-family house. A second dwelling on the property is a 2 1/2-story, cross-gable-roof house with wraparound porch. A shingled barn also stands on the property.
- 26 JAMES E. DEWEY, JR. HOUSE (1906): A 2 1/2-story, house with an asymmetrical 5-bay facade, full-width front porch with scrollwork brackets, and a semi-octagonal bay window at one end.
- 27 ALVIN C. ERNST HOUSE, "STAR COTTAGE" (early 20th century): A 2 1/2-story shingled house with full-width front porch, bay windows, and prominent dormer. Ernst was a blacksmith who worked for Morris L. Negus (see 6/11); by the 1930s, Miss Esther McCarthy operated this as a boarding house with "excellent table" for twenty, "ideally situated between Old and New Harbors."
- 31 ALFRED CHANNING LITTLEFIELD HOUSE, "THE SPARTAN" (early 20th century): A 2 1/2-story shingled house with full-width front porch and prominent cross gable on the facade. Littlefield (1867-1931) operated a restaurant here in the 1910s and 1920s.



## PLAT 6 (continued)

- 38 DWIGHT A. DUNN HOUSE (late 19th/early 20th century): A 1 3/4-story dwelling with a full-width front porch, semi-octagonal bay window, rear ell, and cross-gable roof with iron cresting. Dunn was a fisherman.
- 41 MORRIS L. NEGUS HOUSE, "NEGUS'S COTTAGE," LATER "THE BEACHCOMBER" (mid-19th century et seq.): Set at the edge of a stone retaining wall at the road's edge, this 2 1/2-story dwelling has a wraparound porch with scrollwork brackets and a large ell at rear. The house was probably remodeled by Morris Negus (see 6/11) in the early 20th century as a boarding house; it remained in operation as such through the 1930s.
- 71\* SCHOOL N<sup>o</sup> 1, NOW TOWN HALL (1887, 1970s): A much altered 1-story, end-gable-roof building with additions at rear. This school was converted for use as town offices in the late 20th century.
- 75.2\* EDWARD P. LITTLEFIELD HOUSE (late 19th century): Set on a high basement and partially into the side of a hill, this 2 1/2-story dwelling has an elaborate bracketed wraparound porch and bracketed raking and eaves cornices.
- 77\* CAPTAIN SOLOMAN DODGE HOUSE (before 1850): A 2 1/2-story dwelling with symmetrical 5-bay facade, center entrance flanked by sidelights, and a center chimney. This house uses traditional New England vernacular forms and incorporates building materials from the Nathaniel Briggs House, which stood near here.
- 78\* CAPTAIN RALPH E. DODGE HOUSE (late 19th century): A 2 1/2-story, T-plan dwelling with a wraparound porch. Once a modest *cottage orne*, the house is now bereft of roof cresting, decorative trusswork in the gable ends, and portions of the porch railings. Dodge (1858-1928) was a fisherman; in the 1880s, he was keeper of Life Saving Station N<sup>o</sup> 2.
- 94\* CAPTAIN HIRAM F. WILLIS HOUSE (1884): John Rose, contractor. A 5-bay-facade, center-entrance, mansard-roof cottage. Willis was a fisherman: in the 1890s he captained the ship *Block Island*; by the early 1920s, when he was described as one of the island's leading wholesale fish dealers, he sold his business to the Providence-based firm Rhode Island Fish Co. As early as the 1890s, Willis leased his house for the summer and moved his family to a new summer house.
- 96\* CAPTAIN WILLIAM TALBOT DODGE HOUSE (1888): John F. Hayes, builder. A cottage with bay-window-flanked center entrance, wraparound porch, and prominent dormer centered on the facade. Captain of the schooner *Mystery*, Dodge (1860-1940) was a successful swordfisherman. His house was described by the *Providence Daily Journal* at the time of its construction as "a very neat and tasty cottage": "unique in design,...painted in several colors,...its exterior decoration is striking."
- 104\* "MORTON COTTAGE" (ca. 1883, early 20th century): A 2 1/2-story, end-gable-roof building set back from the street with a prominent 1-story, flat-roof, storefront addition across the facade: the storefront has an off-center recessed entrance and multiple-pane display windows.

## PLAT 6 (continued)

- 105\* NEPTUNE LODGE, N<sup>o</sup> 21, INTERNATIONAL ORDER OF ODD FELLOWS HALL (1879): A 2 1/2-story, end-gable-roof building with a full-width, scrollwork porch set within the mass of the building. Founded in England in the late 18th century, the Odd Fellows were established in Rhode Island in 1829, and this lodge was organized in 1872. The building, which originally incorporated a 1st-floor shop, was used as a lodge into the 20th century; it has since been converted entirely to retail use.
- 107\* PEQUOT HOUSE (1879): A wide, 2 1/2-story hotel with a mansard roof, 10-bay facade, and partially enclosed full-width front porch. Darius B. Dodge (see Plate 6, Lot 133) was an early proprietor of the hotel; by the 1890s it was operated by Thaddeus A. Ball.
- 108\* NEW SHOREHAM HOUSE (1875): A wide, 2 1/2-story hotel with a mansard roof, irregular 6-bay facade and prominent 1-story, flat-roof storefront addition across the facade: the storefront has a recessed center entrance and large-pane, wood-frame display windows.
- 117.2\* NEW NATIONAL HOTEL (1903): A wide, 3 1/2-story hotel set on a high basement, it has a 13-bay facade, full-width wraparound front porch, and mansard roof with sunbonnet dormers. Built by Frank Hayes to replace an 1888 hotel of the same name that burned in 1902, the building incorporates the mansard roof, then somewhat retardataire but commonly used island-wide for hotels.
- 118\* LIBRARY (mid-1970s): Herman Hassinger (New Jersey), architect. A 1-story shingled building in three sections, a recessed center pavilion and projecting end pavilions; the steep gable roofs (with parallel ridge lines) on each section and the prominent chimney in the western pavilion make a striking profile.
- 120\* LIZZIE HAZARD'S SHOP (ca. 1890): A 1-story building set gable end to the street with a false parapet and intact storefront. Miss Hazard sold women's millinery here; in 1895, the building was moved back 15 feet when the street was widened. A common turn-of-the-century commercial form, this little-altered structure is relatively rare today.
- 130\* CAPTAIN WINFIELD S. DODGE HOUSE (late 19th century): A bell-cast mansard-roof cottage with a 5-bay facade, full-width front porch, and bracketed cornice. Dodge was captain of the *Lac La Belle*.
- 132\* JOHN ROSE STORE (ca. 1906): A 2 1/2-story, end-gable-roof building with a symmetrical facade and storefront set within the projecting, full-width front porch. Rose, a carpenter and contractor, operated a shop and chandlery here. This is a little-altered, representative—and now relatively rare—vernacular commercial building.
- 133\* CAPTAIN DARIUS B. DODGE HOUSE (1874): A *cottage orne* with a high roof, steeply pitched dormers and cross gables, pierced bargeboards, and wraparound porch. This prominently sited house caused considerable comment at the time of its construction: the *Providence Evening Bulletin* noted that it "really makes more pretensions to style than any private residence upon our island." Dodge (1844-1921) was a fisherman; in his later years, he subsequently managed the Pequot House (see Plat 6, Lot

## PLAT 6 (continued)

- 107), ran a drugstore, and came to be regarded as a picturesque local character.
- 136\* CHARLES T. SALISBURY HOUSE (1885): H. B. Ingraham (Providence), architect; Almanza Littlefield, builder. A 2 1/2-story Queen Anne house with two-tier porches and cross-gable roof. Salisbury was an agent for the American Screw Company in Providence, and his family continued to summer here into the 1920s.
- 138\* LITTLEFIELD-OLSEN HOUSE (mid-19th century): A 2 1/2-story dwelling with a symmetrical facade and a full-width front porch with scrollwork brackets. Charles Littlefield (1844-1870) built the house; in the early 20th century it was operated as a boarding cottage by Richard Olsen.
- 140\* BURNAL H. DODGE HOUSE, THE BLUE DORY INN (1897-98): John F. Hayes, builder. A 2 1/2-story house with an off-center entrance, prominent bay windows—including a scalloped-shingle-clad, 2-story, gable-roof bay set diagonally on the southwest corner—and balustraded front porch. Dodge (1871-1939), a carpenter, built this house at the time of his marriage to Susan Rebecca Ball. In his later years, he farmed Red Gate Farm, and his wife operated an inn and tea room here; their advertising inevitably included mention of "fresh vegetables from own farm." Well restored, this building continues to function as an inn.
- 143\* RICHARD DODGE DRY GOODS STORE (1886): A 1-story building set gable end to the street with a full-width front porch and center entrance flanked by display windows. This building is typical of modest, late 19th-century commercial buildings.
- 143\* SURF HOTEL (1873, 1884, 1888): A rambling hotel built in three sections: to the east is a 1 1/2-story section, at the center is a 2 1/2-story, mansard-roof structure with prominent, steeply pitched cross gables and a helm-roof cupola, and to the west is a 3 1/2-story mansard-roof section. The facades of all three sections are in the same plane, and a porch extends across the full width of the building. The original, eastern section was built for a Dr. Mann. Charles W. Willis first operated the original building as the Surf Cottage, twice enlarged the building to the west, and changed the name to Surf Hotel. Prominently sited at the corner of Dodge and Water Streets and overlooking both the Old Harbor and Crescent Beach, this building projects the very image of a Victorian seaside resort hotel.
- 155\* CASSIUS CLAY BALL HOUSE "HARBOR COTTAGE" (ca. 1880, 1887): A large 2 1/2-story dwelling with an elaborate, double-tier, wraparound turned-post and bracketed porch, a prominent 3 1/2-story corner tower (added in 1887), and a flared mansard roof. Ball built this as his own residence, and by 1889 was taking in summer visitors. Prominently sited at a major intersection, it is an important island landmark.
- \* "REBECCA AT THE WELL" (1898): A cast-iron statue of a woman holding an urn.

## PLAT 7

- 17\* ADRIAN HOTEL, NOW FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH (1887, 1940s): As originally built, a 2 1/2-story dwelling with a turned-spindle front porch, an end-gable roof, and octagonal corner tower with steep, pyramidal roof; later additions include a 2-story, flat-roof section on the front and a large auditorium to one side. These changes were occasioned by the building's change in use from hotel to church.
- 27\* LITTLEFIELD HOUSE, LATER MANISSES HOTEL (1876): A 2 1/2-story, mansard-roof hotel with a 9-bay facade, 5-story, hip-roof tower centered on the facade, and a full-width front porch with scrollwork brackets. Lorenzo and Halsey C. Littlefield were the original owners of the hotel, which was expanded by a rear wing built in 1883 and torn down in the 1970s. Much deteriorated by 1980, the hotel was one of the first to undergo careful rehabilitation as Block Island emerged as a popular summer spot.
- 31\* GEORGE ELWOOD SMITH HOUSE (1882): A 1 3/4-story house with a 5-bay-facade, full-width front porch with scrollwork brackets, and a bracketed cornice. Smith (1855-1928) was a fisherman.
- 35\* ARTHUR D. ELLIS HOUSE (1891): A 2 1/2-story Queen Anne dwelling with a gable roof that sweeps over the double-tier, full-width front porch set within the mass of the house; the 1st-story porch terminates at one end in a projecting, circular-plan pavilion. Ellis was a woolen manufacturer whose principal residence was in Monson, Massachusetts.
- 44\* CAPTAIN HENRY KITTERMAN LITTLEFIELD HOUSE (1894): A 1 3/4-story house with a 3-bay facade, full-width front porch; the building is set gable end to the street. Active in local politics, Littlefield (1869-1952) was a trap fisherman; he also worked as a building contractor and no doubt built this, his own house.
- 47\* AARON W. MITCHELL HOUSE, "MITCHELL COTTAGE" (1866, 1879): A 1 3/4-story house with prominent cross-gable roof, asymmetrical massing, and wraparound front porch; originally a simple *cottage one*, it is now bereft of the latticework balustrades, scalloped bargeboards, and decorative king posts. Mitchell (1845-1907) operated a boarding house for thirty guests here; the ell on the east side, built in the summer of 1879, expanded his facilities.
- 47B\* ADDISON W. MITCHELL STORE (1900): A 1 3/4-story building with a full-width front porch, asymmetrical facade, and scalloped shingles. Aaron Mitchell (see lot 47) built this for his son soon after the latter's marriage; the couple lived above the shop, which purveyed "fruit, confectionery, and fancy groceries."
- 52\* CAPTAIN HARRY L. ROSS HOUSE (1888): A 2 1/2-story, cross-gable-roof house with a wraparound porch, scalloped bargeboards, and peaked hood molds over the 2nd-story windows. Ross, a fisherman, built this just after his marriage to Lillie Ball.
- 67\* DR. J. E. BENNETT HOUSE (1888): John F. Hayes, builder. A 2 1/2-story house set gable end to the street and with a wraparound front porch and engaged octagonal corner tower. This imposing—and now somewhat

## PLAT 7 (continued)

altered—dwelling was described by the *Providence Daily Journal* in the summer of 1888 as the handsomest recently erected cottage. Bennett got no pleasure from his fine new house, for he died suddenly in December of 1888; his wife operated a rooming house here until her similarly untimely death in 1893.

- 91\* JOSHUA SPRAGUE HOUSE (1893): A 1 3/4-story, T-plan house with a wraparound front porch, bay windows, and cross-gable roof. Sprague (1835-1923) fished and farmed.

## PLAT 8

- 1\* SOUTH EAST LIGHT (1874): A prominent, octagonal-plan tower attached by a 1 1/2-story hyphen to a large, 2 1/2-story double house with mirror-image service ells on the rear. The complex is built of brick with granite trim and sits on a rusticated granite basement; the simple, severe trim echoes Modern Gothic sources. Dramatically sited at the island's southeast corner on Mohegan Bluffs 200 feet above the Atlantic, the light marks the first landfall for ships approaching the New England coast from the south and southeast. Agitation for a light on this site began in the 1850s, but it was only in 1872 that Congress appropriated \$75,000 for construction of this structure. An important aid to navigation in hazardous waters, the light is also important for its rotating first-order Fresnel lens, manufactured in Paris in 1880. Constant erosion of the Mohegan Bluffs makes relocation of the light mandatory, and efforts to that end began in the mid-1980s.
- 5 HOMER RUSSELL HOUSE (1982-84): Homer Russell (Boston), architect. An emphatically vertical, 3-story dwelling with irregular geometric massing and a cross-gable roof. The vertical-format seaside house became popular in the early 1980s, as seen in examples published in *Architectural Record* and *Progressive Architecture*; in designing his own home, architect Russell chose this new form to exploit the fine view southeast toward the Atlantic but retained simple forms and the now-traditional shingle cladding.
- 23 WORLD WAR II OBSERVATION POST (ca. 1942): A tall cylindrical building and a 1-story, L-plan dwelling. Undistinguished architecturally, this complex is important as one of many coastal installations built by the War Department as defense against enemy air and sea attacks; like several others in the state, it has been converted to residential use.
- 48 CAPTAIN MARK L. POTTER HOUSE (1900-01): John Thomas, builder. A foursquare, 2 1/2-story, shingled house with wraparound porch, symmetrical elevations, and prominent dormers in each slope of the high hip roof; the interior is paneled with cypress. Potter, a retired shipmaster from Brooklyn, New York, built this as a summer cottage. Its fine siting above Tilson Cove is also vulnerable to erosion, and the house has been moved inland from its original site, where only fragments of the original foundation remain.
- 84\* SPRING HOUSE (1852, ca. 1872): A 2 1/2-story, bellcast-mansard-roof hotel with an asymmetrical 12-bay facade, full-width bracketed front porch, gable-roof ell centered on the rear, and square-plan, mansard-roof cupola

## PLAT 8 (continued)

centered on the roof. Perpendicular to the hotel and to its west is the Annex, a 2 1/2-story, mansard-roof building with asymmetrical 7-bay facade, wraparound porch, and sunbonnet dormers. One of the first hotels built on Block Island, it took advantage of a commanding seaside site and a mineral spring. It is the largest remaining hotel on the island.

- 86\* SPRING HOUSE COTTAGE (? , 1898): A fine, board-and-batten vernacular Gothic cottage with end-gable roof, wraparound porch, and round-arch windows in the gable end. In the late 1890s, this house was piped with water from the mineral springs at the Spring House and let as a summer cottage; its first occupants were the family of C. de O. Lima, Secretary to the Brazilian Legation.
- 103 CAPTAIN WELCOME DODGE HOUSE (before 1850): A 4-bay-facade cottage with high-stud walls, center chimney, and 1-story ell at left rear. Dodge (1813-1909) was a cod fisherman; after his death, his son Simon, keeper of the South East Light, lived here.
- 108 MITCHELL HOUSE (mid/late 19th century): A 5-bay-facade cottage with center entrance set within a 1-story porch and high-stud walls.
- 125 HALSEY C. LITTLEFIELD HOUSE (1891): A 2 1/2-story dwelling set into the hillside with a 2-story front porch, asymmetrical facade, and prominent wall dormers on the facade. Littlefield (1844-1915) operated a store on the ground story of his house. In recent decades it has been the rectory for St. Andrew's Roman Catholic Church.
- 199 HORATIO N. MILLIKEN HOUSE (1888-90): A 2 1/2-story house with an asymmetrical 5-bay facade, full-width scrollwork front porch, bracketed raking and eaves cornices, and a small 1-story ell at rear. Milliken (1840-1911), the dock master and freight agent for the *Mount Hope* and the *Block Island*, built this as a boarding house; like several other islanders, he undertook such an operation in his later years, probably to provide income after his retirement.
- 207 CAPTAIN WILLIAM PITT DODGE HOUSE (ca. 1890): A 2 1/2-story, end-gable-roof house with wraparound porch. Dodge (1850-1912) was a fisherman; by 1909, he was taking in summer boarders.
- 258\* NORWICH HOUSE, NOW ATLANTIC INN (1878): A 2 1/2-story, mansard-roof hotel with a 7-bay facade, full-width front porch, and large ell at rear.

## PLAT 9

- 10/1 WILLIAM C. SANDS HOUSE (early 19th century): A 2 1/2-story dwelling with a 2-story ell at rear. The 2-story barn has been converted into a garage. Sands (1841-1920) was a farmer; by the turn of the century he and his family took in summer guests.
- 44 WILLIAM SMITH SPRAGUE HOUSE (1884): John Rose, builder. A 5-bay-facade cottage with center entrance and full-width front porch. Sprague (1851-1936) was a farmer; at one time the only owner of a thresher on the island, he provided a valuable service to his fellow farmers.

## PLAT 9 (continued)

- 50 JULIUS DEMING PERKINS HOUSE, "BAYBERRY LODGE" (ca. 1898, altered 1988): A stylish, 2-story shingled dwelling with an inset porch framed by round-arch openings, 15-over-1 sash, and a broad hip roof intersected by dormers and cross gables. Designed in the shingled mode first popularized by McKim, Mead & White in the early 1880s, this house summarizes summer house architecture at the end of the 19th century. Perkins (1830-1911), scion of an old Litchfield, Connecticut China Trade family, worked in a New York wholesale house, organized the Shepaug Valley Railroad, and served in the Connecticut Senate; frequent visitors to this house were his daughter, Edith, and her husband, William Woodrich Rockhill, ambassador to Russia under President Taft.
- 53/1 VAIL COTTAGES (1885): John F. Hayes, builder. Two 1 1/2-story shingled cottages with wraparound porches. Dr. Abby E. Vail, a New York doctor, built these cottages as part of a larger sanitarium complex, which included a large, 3 1/2-story, gambrel-roof hotel, demolished in the 1980s.
- 106 GORDON MILLIKIN HOUSE, "PILOT HILL HOUSE" (1882) Commandingly sited atop Pilot Hill, the highest spot on the east side of the island, this 2 1/2-story house has a full-width front porch and 1 1/2-story ell on the left side. Millikin's (1840-1916) occupation at the time he built his house is unknown—probably a fisherman or farmer—and by the 1890s he, like many other islanders, opened his home to summer boarders.

## PLAT 10

- 1 SCHOOL (mid-20th century): Typical of many schools of its period, this U-plan brick building has a high basement, banked windows, a projecting pedimented entrance pavilion, and a cupola centered on the hip roof.
- 3 CAPTAIN NOAH DODGE HOUSE (1876): A 2 1/2-story house with 5-bay facade, center entrance, and full-width front porch. Dodge was a fisherman.
- 38 RAY W. DODGE HOUSE (1877): A 1 3/4-story dwelling with and asymmetrical 5-bay facade and full-width, scrollwork front porch, set behind a picket fence and near the Spring House. Dodge (1850-1929) was an employee of the Spring House hotel.
- 43 BENJAMIN S. BABCOCK HOUSE (ca. 1885): A high-studded shingled cottage with an asymmetrical 4-bay facade and off-center chimney.

## PLAT 11

- 1 SALLY MAZZUR HOUSE (1950s): A shingled, gambrel-roof cottage with 3-bay facade on the end of the building. The house emulates a house probably built in 1691 by John Alcock; in the 20th century it was the summer home of New York songwriter Arthur Penn, who dubbed it "Smilin' Through" after his musical of the same name. Mrs. Mazzur tore down the old house and replaced it with this simulacrum.

## PLAT 11 (continued)

- 11 HENRY C. SPRAGUE HOUSE (before 1850): A shingled cottage with several outbuildings, including barn, shed, and privy. Sprague (1840-1902) was a farmer.
- 32 EVERETT D. BARLOW HOUSE, "MOHEGAN COTTAGE" (1886): Charles E. Miller (New York), architect; John F. Hayes, builder. A south-facing, 2 1/2-story, T-plan dwelling with a wide, wraparound porch, prominent turret on the facade, and a high hip roof. Barlow, a Brooklyn lawyer, and his family had summered on the island since the late 1870s and returned here seasonally well into the 20th century. Described at the time of its completion as "a compound of the Swiss and Queen Anne styles," the house was published in the August 1886 issue of *Scientific American* as a typical American summer cottage. Its vivid olive green and red paint scheme has been subdued to white and the medievalizing struts on the porch have been simplified, but the house remains otherwise remarkably intact.
- 35 JAMES S. MURRAY HOUSE (late 19th century): A 2 1/2-story, T-plan dwelling with a wraparound porch and cross-gable roof. Murray was a farmer.
- 43 JOSHUA A. LITTLEFIELD HOUSE (1884): John Rose, carpenter. A typical, vernacular dwelling, 1 3/4 stories high with a four bay facade. Littlefield (1851-1928), a farmer, probably built this about the time of his marriage.

## PLAT 12

- 8 THE REVEREND EZEKIEL ROSE LITTLEFIELD HOUSE (before 1850): A shingled cottage with center chimney and center entrance in the 3-bay facade. The house has a large addition at the rear, and a shingled barn stands beyond the house. Littlefield was the pastor of the Free-Will Baptist Church.
- 11 JOHN P. CHAMPLIN HOUSE (mid-19th century): A vernacular Greek Revival cottage with five bay facade, center entrance with sidelights, and a 1 1/2-story ell.

## PLAT 13

- 30 WILLIAM P. LEWIS HOUSE (mid-19th century?): A 2 1/2-story house with a 5-bay facade, center entrance with sidelights, and a center chimney. Lewis (1822-1912) was a farmer.

## PLAT 14

- 39 UNITED STATES LIFE SAVING STATION (1886): Albert B. Bibb (Washington, D. C.), architect. A shingled building with a complex, spreading gable-and-hip roof, irregular fenestration, and wide bays with swinging doors (their openings now glazed) at the west end of both the



## PLAT 14 (continued)

north and south elevations; a broad deck sweeps around the north, west, and south sides. Erected to replace an earlier life saving station on the same site, this building provided quarters for a full-time keeper and a crew of six. Approximately thirty of this design, known as "Bibb #2," were built in New England. Originally faced with clapboard and painted white with red trim, it has been handsomely remodeled into summer house with a spectacular view west across the Atlantic Ocean.

## PLAT 15

- 13 ASA R. BALL HOUSE (before 1850): A center-chimney cottage with center entrance in the 5-bay facade and an ell to one side. Outbuildings include a barn.
- 57 DEACON SYLVESTER MILLER HOUSE (before 1850): A shingled cottage with a center chimney and a lean-to addition. Miller (1820-1886), one of the principal builders of the renowned double-ender Block Island boats, constructed the boats at this site.
- 66 JULIUS S. SMITH HOUSE 2 (mid-19th century): A shingled cottage with two symmetrically placed dormers on the 5-bay facade, center entrance, and a rear ell. Smith was a fisherman and carpenter.
- 76 WILLIAM CROOK ALLEN HOUSE, "SUNSET VIEW LODGE" (1892): John F. Hayes, builder. A 1 3/4-story vernacular house with a 5-bay facade, center entrance, wraparound front porch, two symmetrically placed dormers on the facade, and a 1-story ell on one side. Allen (1854-1935) was a merchant.
- 78 JOHN MOTT HOUSE (ca. 1837): A 5-bay facade, center-entrance dwelling with a 1-story rear ell. Mott (1802-1856) was a farmer, and his family continued to live here into the 20th century.
- 99 THADDEUS P. DUNN HOUSE (ca. 1893): A 1 3/4-story clapboard dwelling with a full-width front porch across the narrow, 3-bay facade, a cross-gable roof, and a 1 1/2-story ell at rear. Outbuildings include a barn, sheds, and a privy. Dunn (1865-1941) was a farmer and fisherman.
- 116 CAPTAIN JOHN B. DUNN HOUSE (1883): John Rose, carpenter. A 2 1/2-story, 5-bay-facade dwelling with a wraparound front porch, paired brackets on the cornices, and a 1-story ell to one side. Dunn (1841-1916) was a fisherman.
- 119 CAPTAIN AUGUSTINE W. DUNN HOUSE (mid-/late 19th century): A 1 3/4-story house with a 3-bay facade, center entrance, full-width front porch and cross-gable roof. Dunn (1850-1931) variously occupied himself at fishing, farming, carpentry; by 1913 he was advertising rooms for summer visitors here.
- 129 ROBERT D. DUNN HOUSE (before 1850): A cottage with a 3-bay facade, off-center entrance, and steep roof.

## PLAT 16

- 31 DISTRICT 4 SCHOOL (1876): A much altered, 1 1/2-story building, converted to residential use in the 1930s.
- 35 FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH (1920): A simple, clapboard end-gable-roof structure with round-arch windows and entrance in a square corner tower with a high pyramidal roof. The original meetinghouse, which stood several hundred yards away, burned in 1869; its immediate replacement was destroyed in the Great Gale of the same year. The 1870 replacement, too, met a fiery end in 1919, and was succeeded by this typically simple but obviously ecclesiastical structure.
- 56 JOHN A. MITCHELL HOUSE (1889): Nathaniel D. Ball, carpenter. A 4-bay-facade cottage with high-stud walls, off-center chimney, and 1-story ell to one side. This simple dwelling illustrates the persistence of traditional forms for modest houses.
- 74 DANIEL MOTT HOUSE (late 18th/early 19th century): A shingled center-chimney cottage with center entrance in the 5-bay facade. Mott (1774-1865) was a farmer, and his son and grandson continued to farm here; in 1922, one of the finest crops of turnips on the island was harvested here.
- 86 HERMAN A. MITCHELL HOUSE (ca. 1875): A 1 3/4-story dwelling with a 5-bay facade, center entrance, full-width front porch, and cross-gable roof; the rear ell was added in 1880. A barn stands adjacent to the house. Mitchell (1851-1925) was a farmer, and he probably built this house around the time of his marriage to Marion Millikin in December 1874.
- 91 ALVIN H. SPRAGUE HOUSE (mid-19th century): A 2 1/2-story house. Sprague (1838-1921) and his family operated a store here, at what was the old center of town. This is one of the few buildings associated with the old center.

## PLAT 17

- 11 ATMORE W. ALLEN HOUSE (mid-19th century): A shingled center-chimney cottage with a 5-bay facade and center entrance. Allen (1851-1919) was a fisherman, captain of the schooner *Laura E. Gamage*.
- 15 NOAH BALL WESTCOTT HOUSE (1885): A modest end-gable-roof cottage with 3-bay facade and full-width front porch. Westcott (1846-1926) was a laborer.
- 16 JOHN F. HAYES HOUSE (late 19th century): An end-gable roof cottage with ample wraparound porch with paired columns. Hayes (1856-1936) was the prolific builder responsible for much of the construction on the island during its development as a summer resort in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.
- 17 AMOS D. MITCHELL HOUSE (1884): A 2-story, H-plan bracketed villa with a symmetrical facade: the projecting wings have semi-octagonal bay windows and low-pitch gable roofs, the recessed center section—with the

## PLAT 17 (continued)

principal entrance—has a steep gable roof, and a porch (now screened) spans the center section. A striking, if somewhat untutored, composition, this house strongly recalls the pattern-book designs so widely spread in the 19th century: indeed, it owes a debt to Design XXV, "A Plain Timber Cottage-Villa" in Andrew Jackson Downing's *The Architecture of Country Houses*, which first appeared in 1850.

- 19 WILLIAM R. SMITH MOTT HOUSE (before 1850): A shingled center-chimney cottage with an asymmetrical facade and ell to one side. Mott (1833-1912) was a farmer; between 1850 and 1870, he moved this house to its present site from the Neck.
- 27 LORENZO LITTLEFIELD HOUSE (mid-/late 19th century, 1888): A picturesque rambling 1 1/2- and 2-story house with an irregular plan, varied fenestration, and steeply pitched cross-gable roofs. Littlefield was a merchant with a store in this vicinity, the site of the old town center.
- 31 ANDERSON C. ROSE HOUSE (1887): A 1 3/4-story house with a 5-bay facade, center entrance, full-width front porch with scrollwork brackets, two symmetrically placed dormers on the facade, and a jerkinhead-gable roof. The format of this house follows long established island traditions, but the decorative shingle work in the dormers and the picturesque roof form link the house to stylish late 19th-century domestic architecture—and not surprisingly, for Rose (1863-1934) was a builder and no doubt wanted to display his talents in the construction of his own house.
- 50 CENTRAL BAPTIST CHURCH PARSONAGE (1887): A mansard-roof cottage with a 5-bay facade, center entrance, full-width front porch, and paired brackets on the cornices.
- 51 ALONZO D. MITCHELL HOUSE (mid-19th century? 1888): A small shingled cottage with irregular fenestration and an off-center entrance. This modest cottage represents the rebuilding of an earlier structure for an island fisherman.

## PLAT 18

- 6 HAMILTON M. BALL HOUSE (1892): Anderson C. Rose, builder. A 1 3/4-story house with a 5-bay facade, center entrance, and full-width front porch. A handsome barn with exposed stone basement stands adjacent to the house. Ball (1849-1933) was a farmer; by the early 20th century, he and his wife were letting rooms to tourists.
- 18 THOMAS T. DOGGETT HOUSE, "BEACON HILL TOWER" (1928): An asymmetrical-plan, rock-faced dwelling 1 story high with a cross-gable roof, the house's most conspicuous feature is a round-plan 2-story tower; it is prominently sited atop Beacon Hill, the island's highest point.
- 24 DODGE HOUSE (19th century): A bell-cast mansard-roof cottage with a 5-bay facade, center entrance, full-width front porch with scrollwork trim, and prominent gabled dormers. Edward Dodge (1778-1867), son Captain William Dodge (1799-1894), and grandson James Alvin Dodge (1836-1907)

## PLAT 18 (continued)

each lived at this site; this house may be the family homestead considerably remodeled or a late 19th-century replacement.

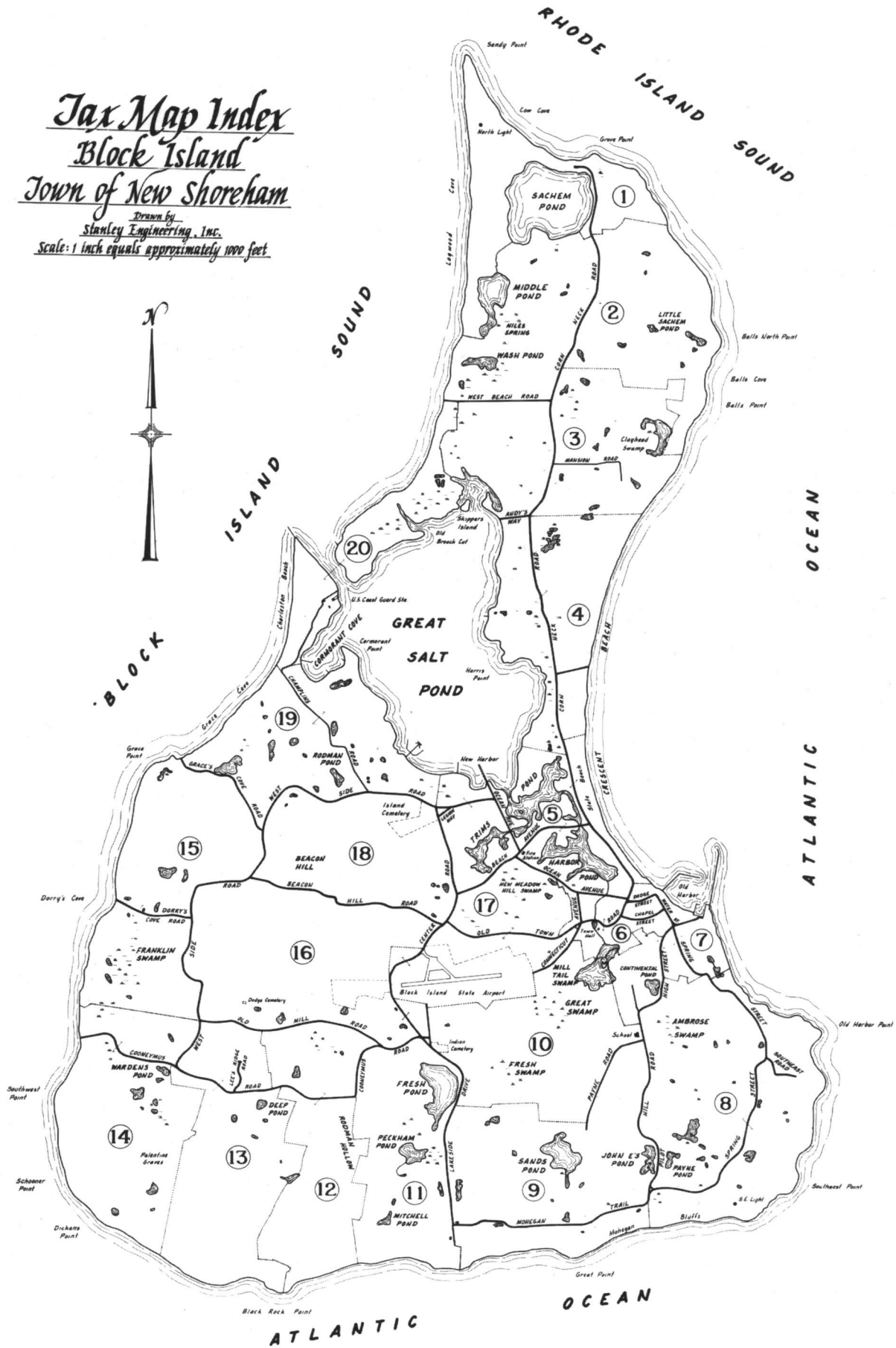
- 43 RUFUS AUGUSTUS WILLIS HOUSE (late 19th century): A shingled cottage with a full-width front porch and an ell (completed in 1892) to one side, it is remarkable for its stretched horizontal quality. Willis (1850-1921) was a fisherman.
- 47-1 RUFUS D. WILLIS HOUSE (1915): A 2-story, hip-roof dwelling with a 2-tier full-width front porch and hip roof dormers. Willis, the son of Rufus Augustus Willis (see plat 18, lot 43) built this pre-fabricated house purchased from Sears, Roebuck & Co., the Chicago-based department store that sold house kits during the first three decades of this century.
- 50 SILAS MOTT HOUSE (late 19th century): A cross-gable-roof cottage with 3-bay-facade, full-width front porch, and prominent dormer projecting from the mass of the house above the front porch.
- 52 FENNER BALL HOUSE (early 20th century): A large, foursquare house with a high hip roof, prominent dormers, and a wraparound porch, partially roofed. Fenner Ball (born 1877) was a fisherman who bought his own boat, the *Why Not*, in 1895. In 1921, the Center Methodist Church purchased the house for use as a parsonage.
- 58 CENTRAL HOUSE ANNEX (ca. 1883): A handsome mansard-roof cottage with a 5-bay facade, center entrance, wraparound porch with scrollwork balusters and brackets, and bay windows. Ray Sands Littlefield (1846-1914) built this to expand the Central House hotel.
- 61 PRIMITIVE METHODIST CHURCH (1907): John F. Hayes, contractor. A severely simple, end-gable-roof building with a hooded center entrance flanked by pedimented multiple-pane windows; the same windows are regularly spaced on the sides.
- 62 SAMUEL BALL HOUSE (18th century, 1980): A large, gambrel-roof cottage with 5-bay facade, center entrance, center chimney, and 1-story ells at each end of the rear elevation. The interior was completely remodeled in 1980. Ball (1766-1852) grew up in this house, probably built by his father; he probably transmitted much of the island's early oral history.

## PLAT 19

- 39\* PELEG CHAMPLIN HOUSE (ca. 1820): A fine, intact farmhouse nestled into the rolling hills on the island's west coast; in a clearing surrounded by dry-laid stone walls, the house overlooks low, thick, overgrown farmland and Block Island Sound to the northwest. The farmhouse is a shingled, center-chimney, 5-bay-facade, center entrance cottage with a 1-story rear ell on the northwest corner. The only outbuilding is a modified later 19th-century barn, but foundations of other structures survive. This is one of the best and best preserved of the island's early farmhouses. It is listed in the State Register and National Register of Historic Places.

# Tax Map Index Block Island Town of New Shoreham

Drawn by  
Stanley Engineering, Inc.  
Scale: 1 inch equals approximately 1000 feet



SANDY POINT

RHODE ISLAND SOUND

BLOCK

ISLAND

BEACH WEST

PLUM BEACH

SOUND

SACHEM POND  
(CHAGUM POND)  
(SAUKUM POND)

GROVE POINT

COW

COVE

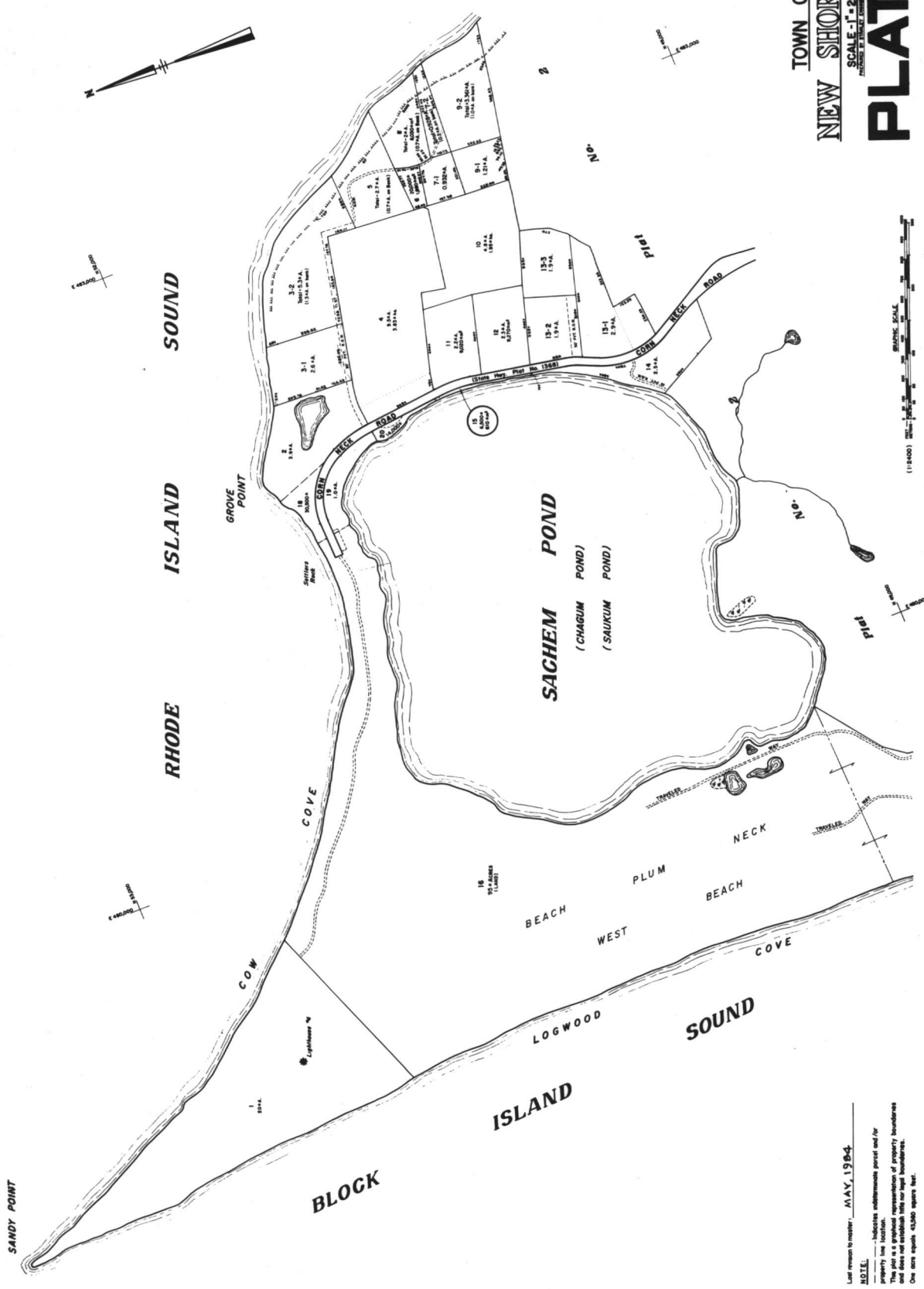
LOGWOOD

NECK

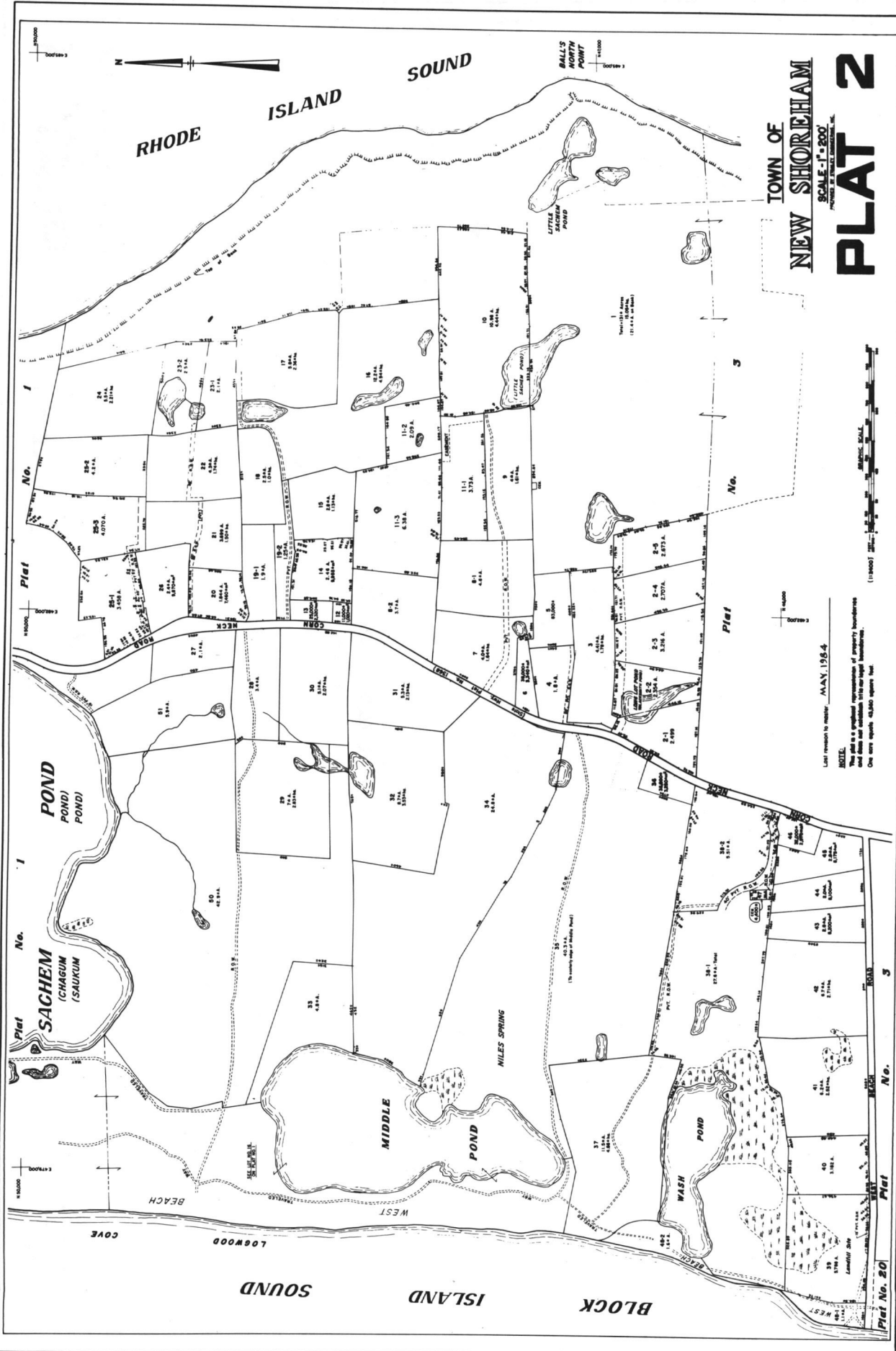
COVE



# TOWN OF NEW SHOREHAM SCALE - 1" = 200' PLAT 1



Leaf revised to master, MAY, 1964.  
NOTE: --- indicates subdivision parcel and/or property line location.  
The plat is a general representation of property boundaries and does not constitute a warranty of title.  
One acre equals 43,560 square feet.



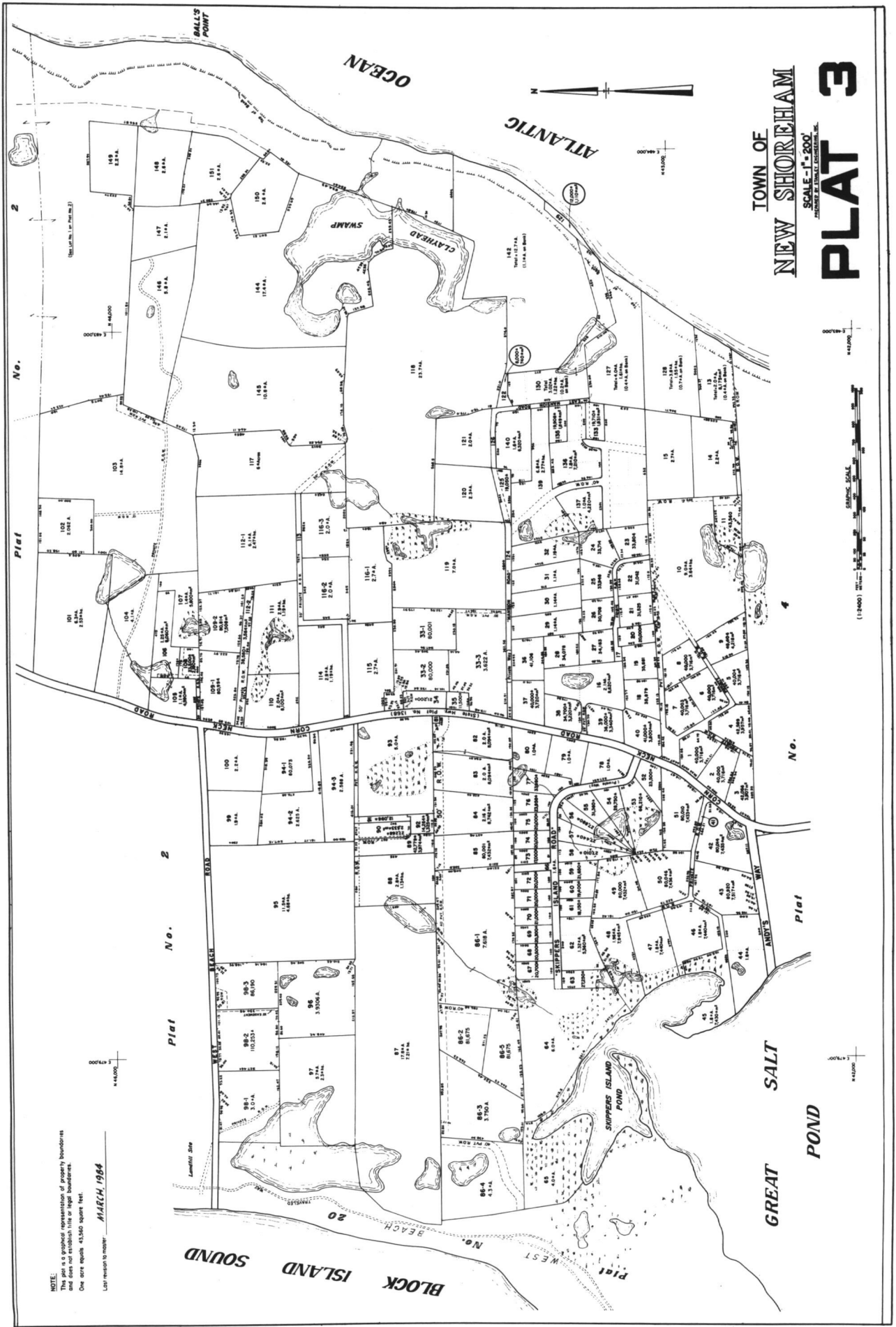
TOWN OF  
**NEW SHOREHAM**  
 SCALE - 1" = 200'  
 PLAT 2

LAST REVISION TO MAP: MAY 1984  
 NOTE: This plat is a prepared representation of property boundaries and does not establish title or legal boundaries. One acre equals 43,560 square feet.



NOTE:  
This plat is a graphic representation of property boundaries  
and does not establish title or legal boundaries.  
One acre equals 43,560 square feet.

LAST REVISION TO MAP BY: **MARCH, 1964**



TOWN OF  
**NEW SHOREHAM**  
SCALE - 1" = 200'  
PLAT **3**

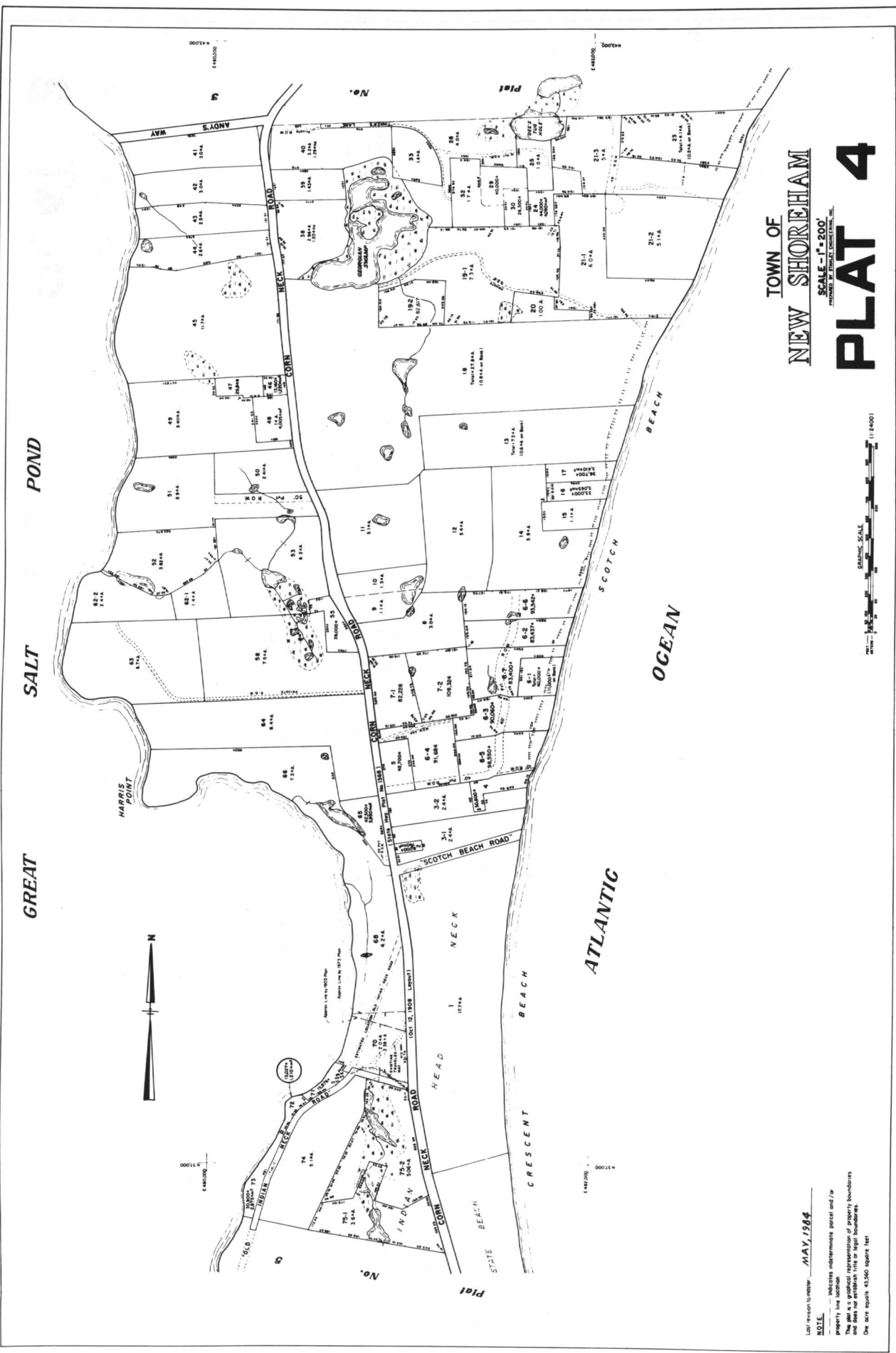




GREAT

SALT

POND



TOWN OF  
**NEW SHOREHAM**

SCALE - 1" = 200'  
 DRAWN BY: ERIK L. CHAMBERLAIN, INC.

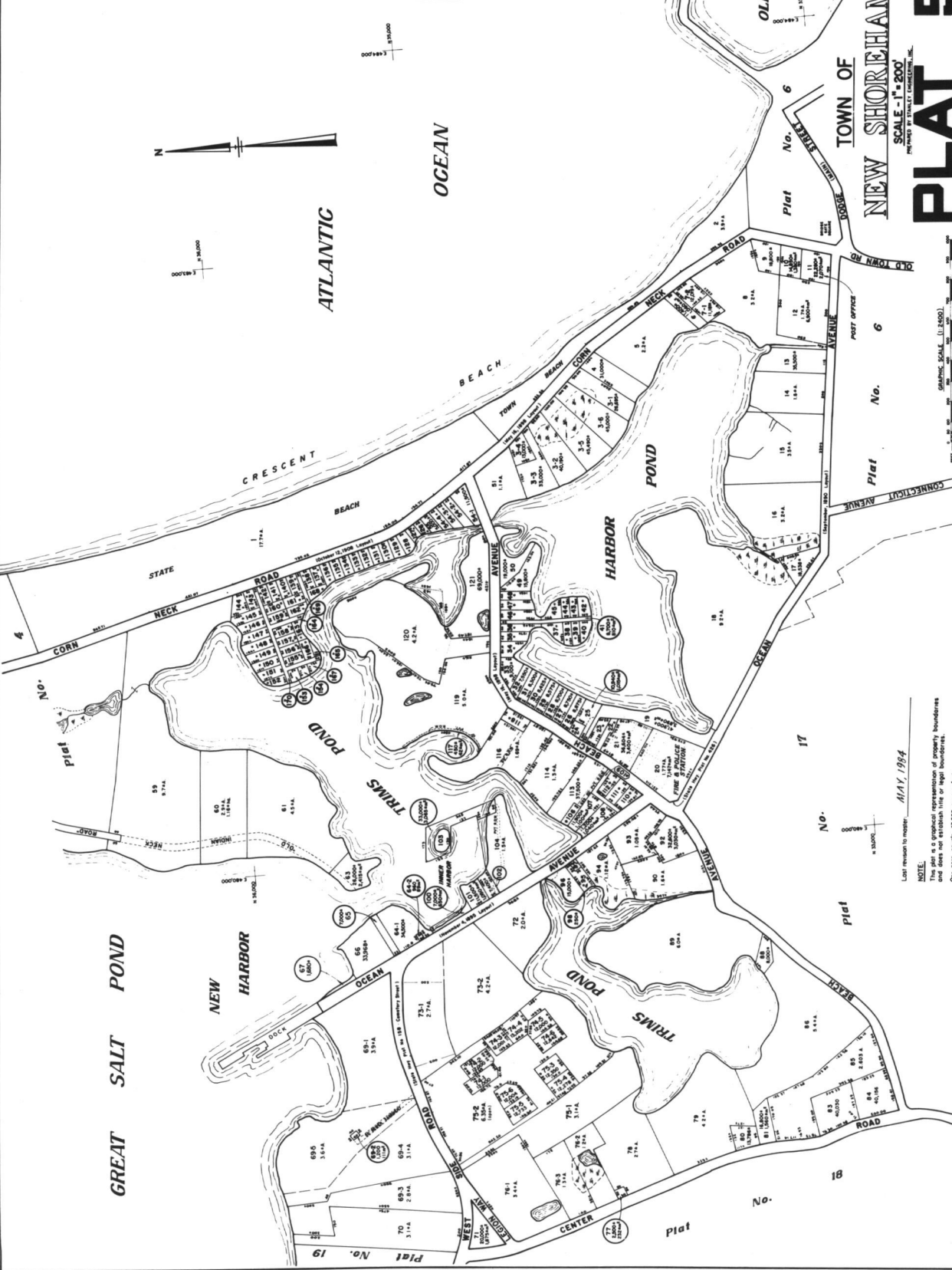
**PLAT 4**



LAST REVISION TO DRAWING: MAY, 1964

**NOTE.**  
 - indicates indeterminate parcel and/or  
 property line location  
 - represents of adjacent boundaries  
 and does not establish Title or legal boundaries.  
 One acre equals 43,560 square feet!

LOT	Sq. Feet	Sq. Meters	LOT	Sq. Feet	Sq. Meters
1	125	11.5	101	1000	92.9
2	125	11.5	102	1000	92.9
3	125	11.5	103	1000	92.9
4	125	11.5	104	1000	92.9
5	125	11.5	105	1000	92.9
6	125	11.5	106	1000	92.9
7	125	11.5	107	1000	92.9
8	125	11.5	108	1000	92.9
9	125	11.5	109	1000	92.9
10	125	11.5	110	1000	92.9
11	125	11.5	111	1000	92.9
12	125	11.5	112	1000	92.9
13	125	11.5	113	1000	92.9
14	125	11.5	114	1000	92.9
15	125	11.5	115	1000	92.9
16	125	11.5	116	1000	92.9
17	125	11.5	117	1000	92.9
18	125	11.5	118	1000	92.9
19	125	11.5	119	1000	92.9
20	125	11.5	120	1000	92.9
21	125	11.5	121	1000	92.9
22	125	11.5	122	1000	92.9
23	125	11.5	123	1000	92.9
24	125	11.5	124	1000	92.9
25	125	11.5	125	1000	92.9
26	125	11.5	126	1000	92.9
27	125	11.5	127	1000	92.9
28	125	11.5	128	1000	92.9
29	125	11.5	129	1000	92.9
30	125	11.5	130	1000	92.9
31	125	11.5	131	1000	92.9
32	125	11.5	132	1000	92.9
33	125	11.5	133	1000	92.9
34	125	11.5	134	1000	92.9
35	125	11.5	135	1000	92.9
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37	125	11.5	137	1000	92.9
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40	125	11.5	140	1000	92.9
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44	125	11.5	144	1000	92.9
45	125	11.5	145	1000	92.9
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52	125	11.5	152	1000	92.9
53	125	11.5	153	1000	92.9
54	125	11.5	154	1000	92.9
55	125	11.5	155	1000	92.9
56	125	11.5	156	1000	92.9
57	125	11.5	157	1000	92.9
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60	125	11.5	160	1000	92.9
61	125	11.5	161	1000	92.9
62	125	11.5	162	1000	92.9
63	125	11.5	163	1000	92.9
64	125	11.5	164	1000	92.9
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74	125	11.5	174	1000	92.9
75	125	11.5	175	1000	92.9
76	125	11.5	176	1000	92.9
77	125	11.5	177	1000	92.9
78	125	11.5	178	1000	92.9
79	125	11.5	179	1000	92.9
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83	125	11.5	183	1000	92.9
84	125	11.5	184	1000	92.9
85	125	11.5	185	1000	92.9
86	125	11.5	186	1000	92.9
87	125	11.5	187	1000	92.9
88	125	11.5	188	1000	92.9
89	125	11.5	189	1000	92.9
90	125	11.5	190	1000	92.9
91	125	11.5	191	1000	92.9
92	125	11.5	192	1000	92.9
93	125	11.5	193	1000	92.9
94	125	11.5	194	1000	92.9
95	125	11.5	195	1000	92.9
96	125	11.5	196	1000	92.9
97	125	11.5	197	1000	92.9
98	125	11.5	198	1000	92.9
99	125	11.5	199	1000	92.9
100	125	11.5	200	1000	92.9

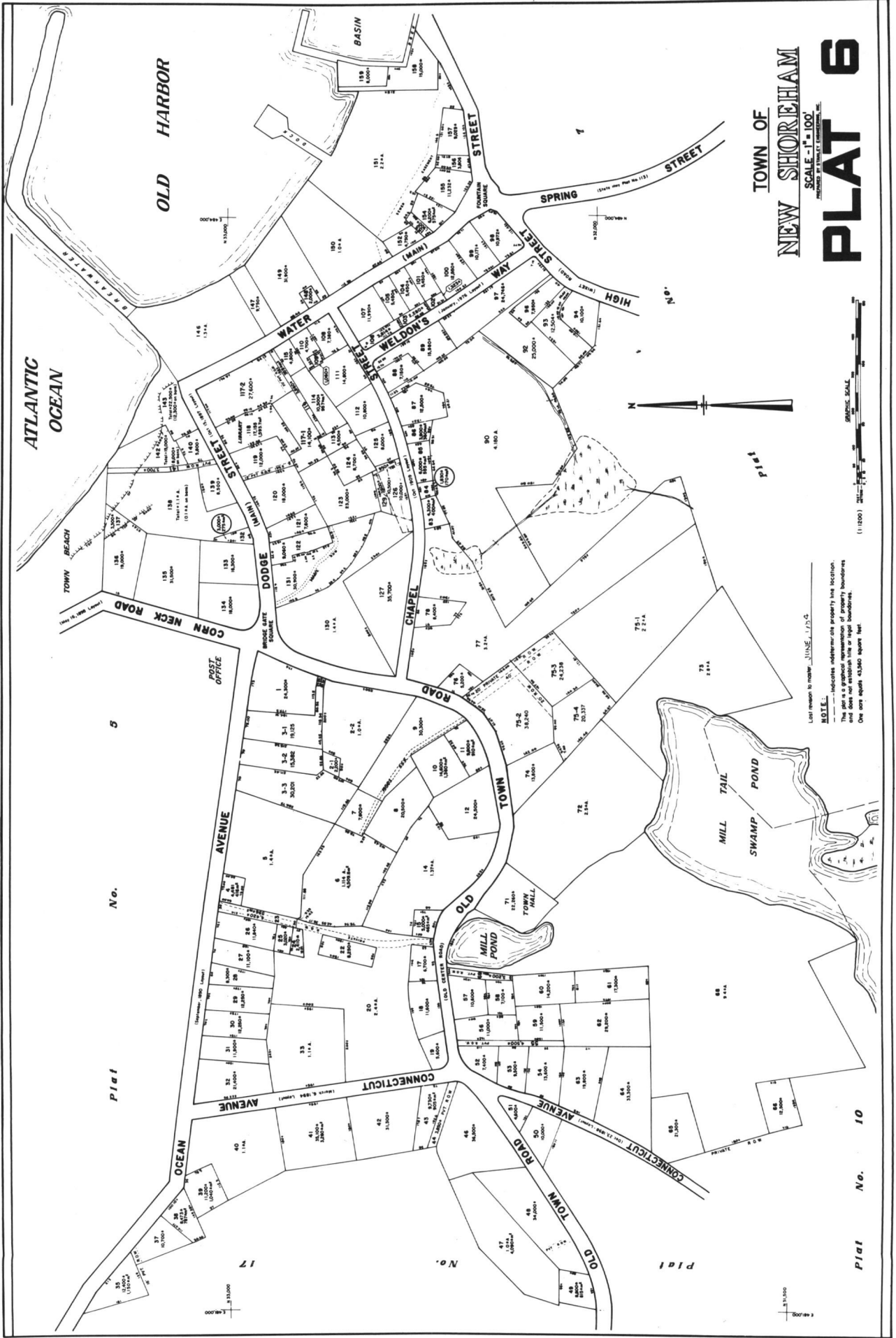


TOWN OF  
**NEW SHOREHAM**  
 SCALE - 1" = 200'  
 PREPARED BY PLANETARY ENGINEERING, INC.

# PLAT 5

NOTE:  
 This plat is a graphical representation of property boundaries and is not a legal document.  
 One acre equals 43,560 square feet.

Last revision to register: MAY, 1984

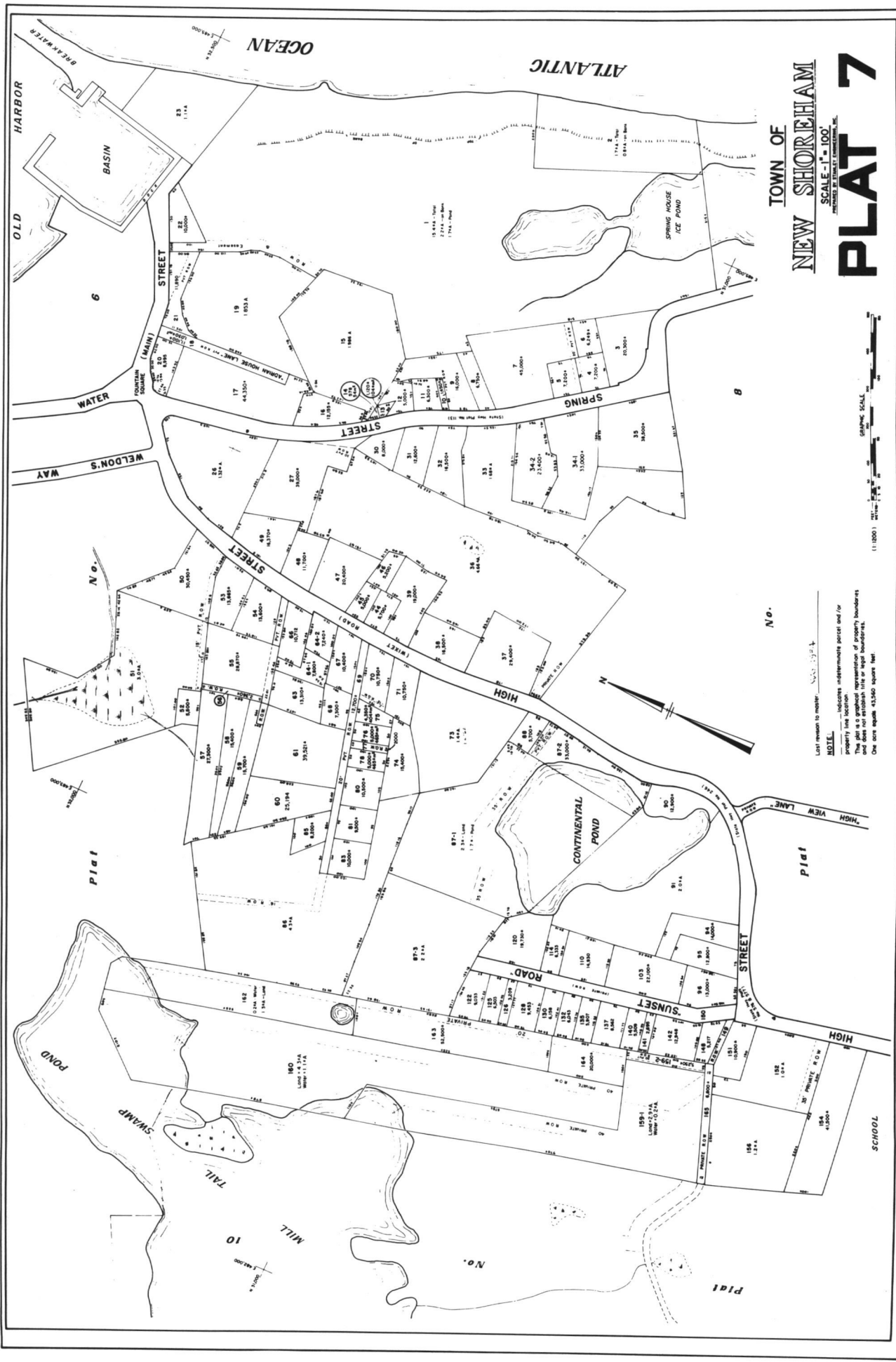


TOWN OF  
**NEW SHOREHAM**  
SCALE - 1" = 100'  
**PLAT 6**

Last revision to map: JUNE, 1975.

**NOTE:**  
--- indicates undetermined site location.  
The plat is a graphic representation of property boundaries and does not establish title or legal boundaries.  
One acre equals 43,560 square feet.



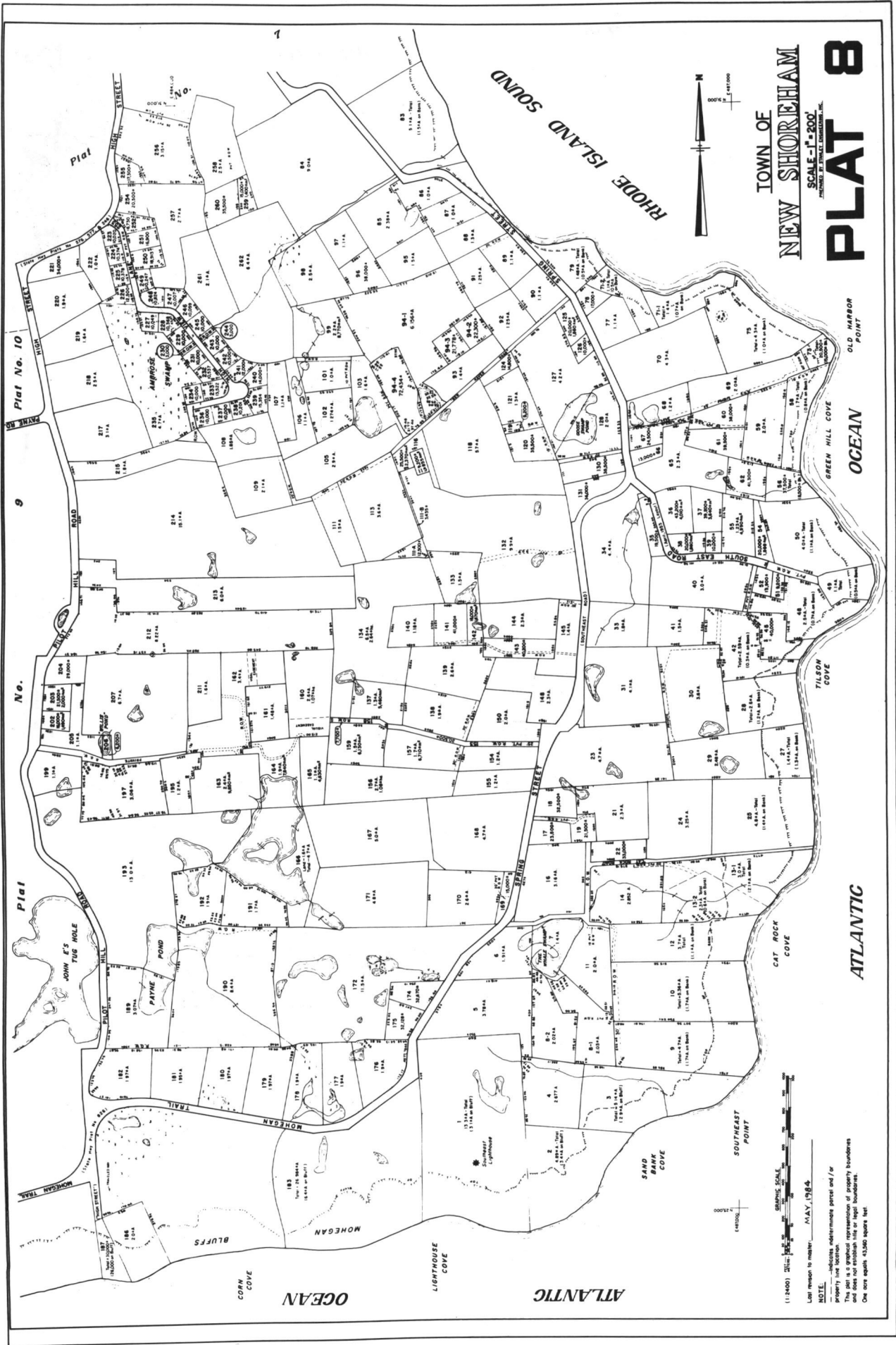


TOWN OF  
**NEW SHOREHAM**  
 SCALE - 1" = 100'  
**PLAT 7**

Last revised to reflect: Nov. 1974

**NOTE:**  
 - indicates indeterminate parcel and/or property line location.  
 - indicates location of property boundaries. The plat is a general reference map and not a legal document.  
 One acre equals 43,560 square feet.



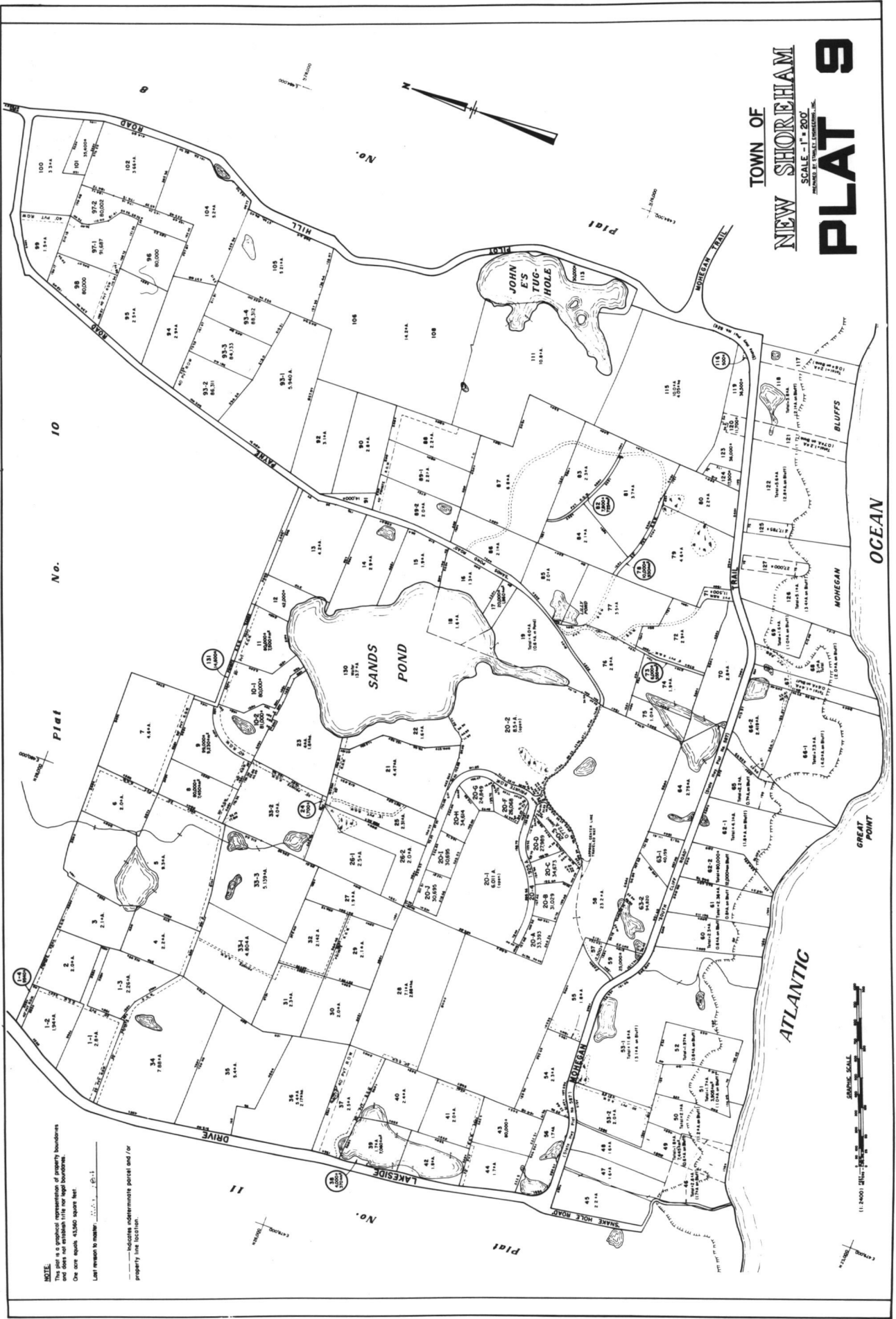


TOWN OF  
**NEW SHOREHAM**  
 SCALE = 1" = 200'  
 PREPARED BY STEWART CARROLL, INC.  
**PLAT 8**

GRAPHIC SCALE  
 1" = 200'  
 0 100 200 300 400 500 600 700 800 900 1000  
 FEET

Last revision to master: MAY, 1984  
 NOTE:  
 - indicates undetermined parcel and / or  
 - indicates the location representation of property boundaries  
 and does not establish title or legal boundaries.  
 One acre equals 43,560 square feet

TOWN OF  
**NEW SHOREHAM**  
 SCALE = 1" = 200'  
 DRAWN BY: TRAVEL DEVELOPMENT, INC.  
**PLAT 9**



**NOTE:**

This plat is a graphical representation of property boundaries and does not establish title or legal boundaries.

One acre equals 43,560 square feet.

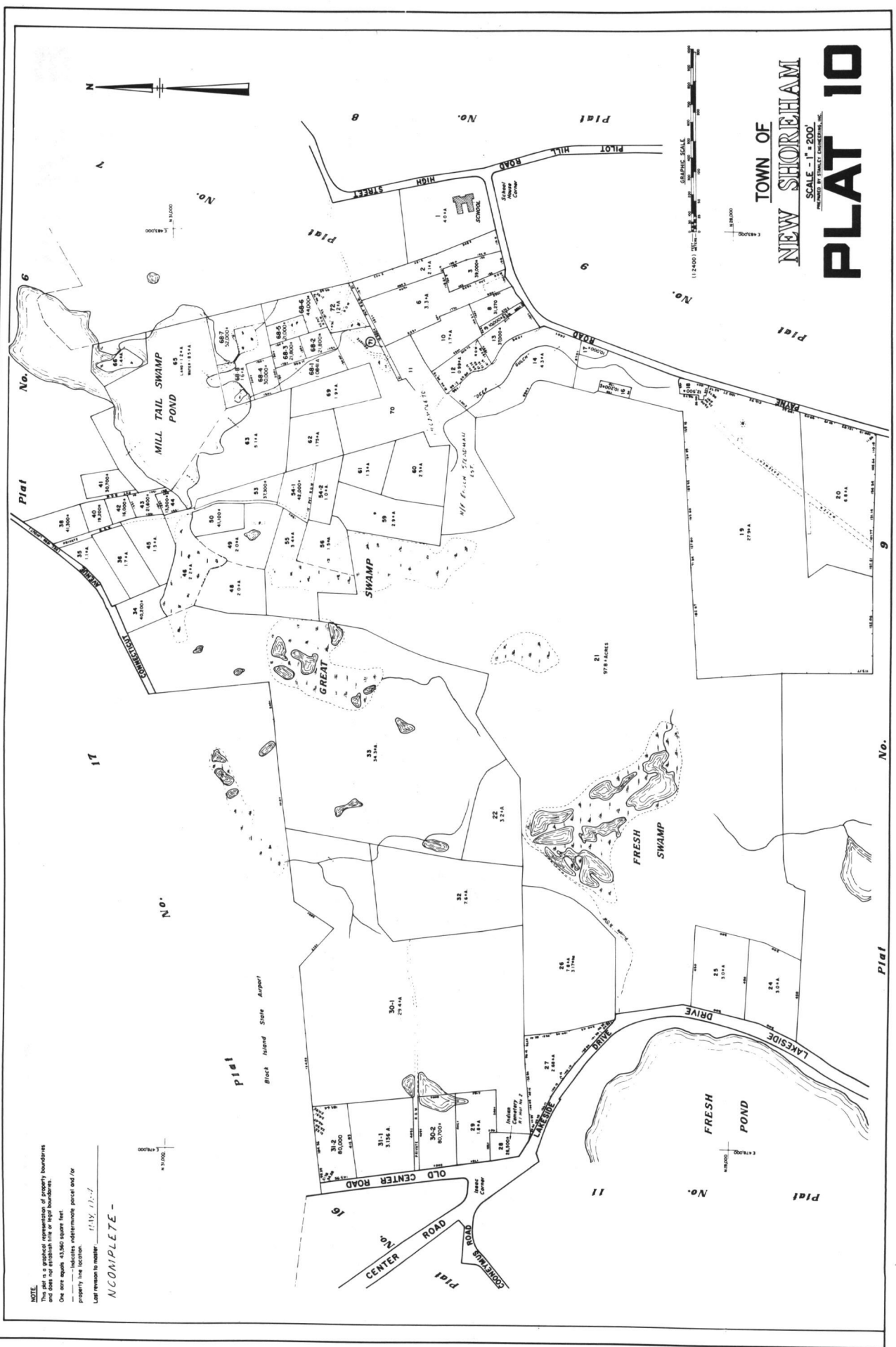
Lot area is shown as follows:  $\text{---}$   $\text{---}$   $\text{---}$

$\text{---}$  indicates undetermined parcel used for property line location.



(1:200)

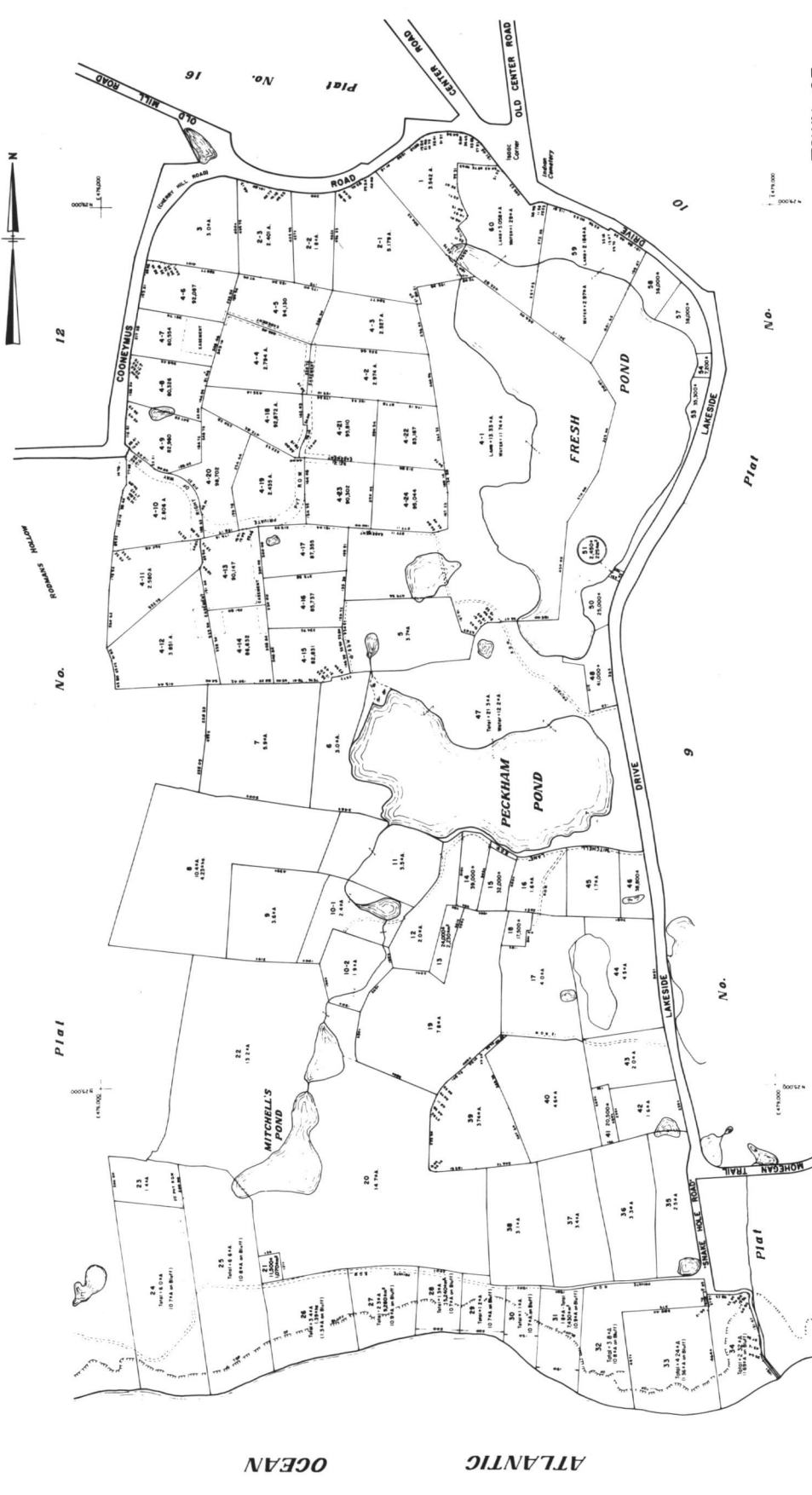
**NOTE.**  
 This plat is a graphical representation of property boundaries and does not establish title or legal boundaries.  
 One acre equals 43,560 square feet.  
 Property lines are indicated by dashed lines.  
 User permission to master: 11/11/11-1  
 INCOMPLETE -



TOWN OF  
**NEW SHOREHAM**  
 SCALE - 1" = 200'  
**PLAT 10**

GRAPHIC SCALE  
 (1:2400) 1" = 200'

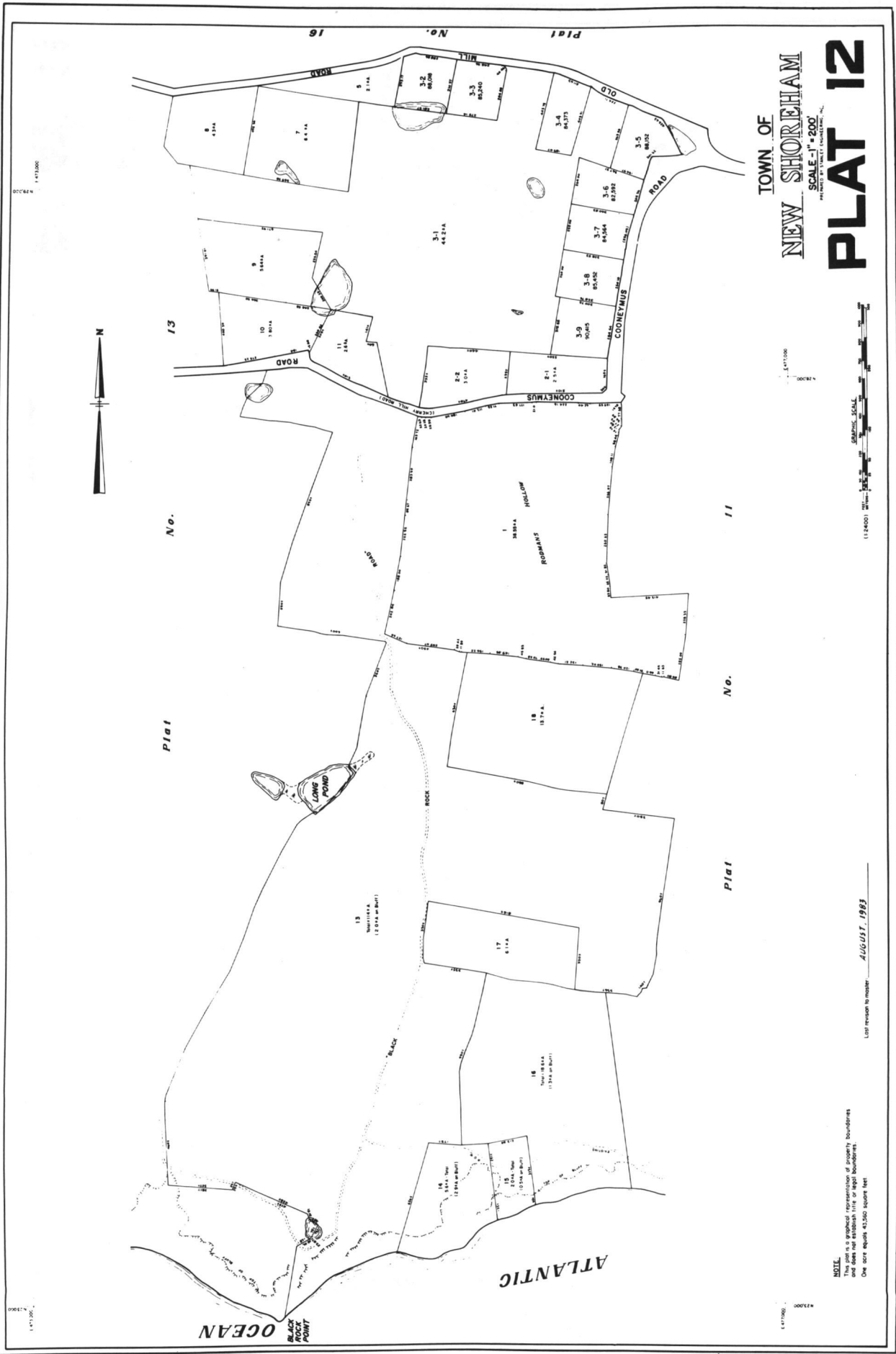
TOWN OF  
**NEW SHOREHAM**  
 SCALE - 1" = 200'  
**PLAT 11**



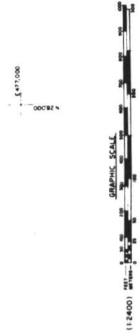
Left revision to register - 2/20/18, 7/9/1  
 NOTE:  
 - Indicates intermediate parcel and/or property line location  
 This plat is a graphical representation of property boundaries and does not constitute a title or right boundaries. One acre equals 43,560 square feet.







**TOWN OF SHOREHAM**  
**NEW SCALE - 1" = 200'**  
**PLAT 12**



NOTE: This is a graphic representation of property boundaries and does not establish title or legal boundaries. One acre equals 43,560 square feet.

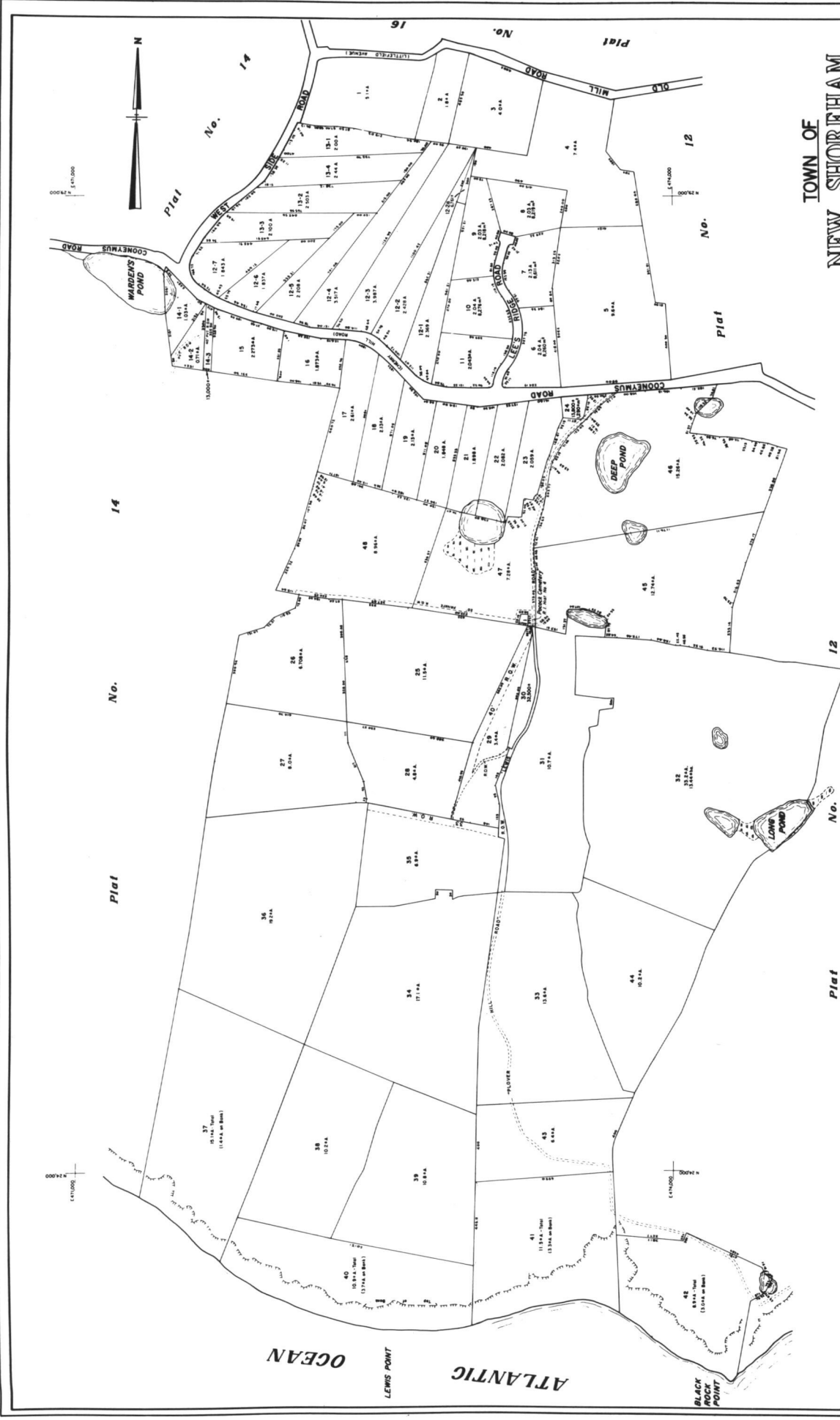
Last revision to master: **AUGUST, 1983**

1471000  
 229200

1471000  
 229200

1471000  
 229200

1124001



TOWN OF SHOREHAM  
 NEW SHOREHAM  
 SCALE - 1" = 200'  
 PREPARED BY CHAS. L. CARROLL, INC.

# PLAT 13

Last revision to reader, JUNE, 1964.

NOTE:  
 This plat is a graphic representation of property boundaries and does not establish title or legal boundaries.  
 One acre equals 43,560 square feet.



OCEAN

SOUTHWEST POINT

SCHOONER POINT

DICKENS POINT

ATLANTIC

Plat No. 13

Plat No. 13

Plat No. 13

Plat No. 13

Plat No. 13

Plat No. 13

Plat No. 13

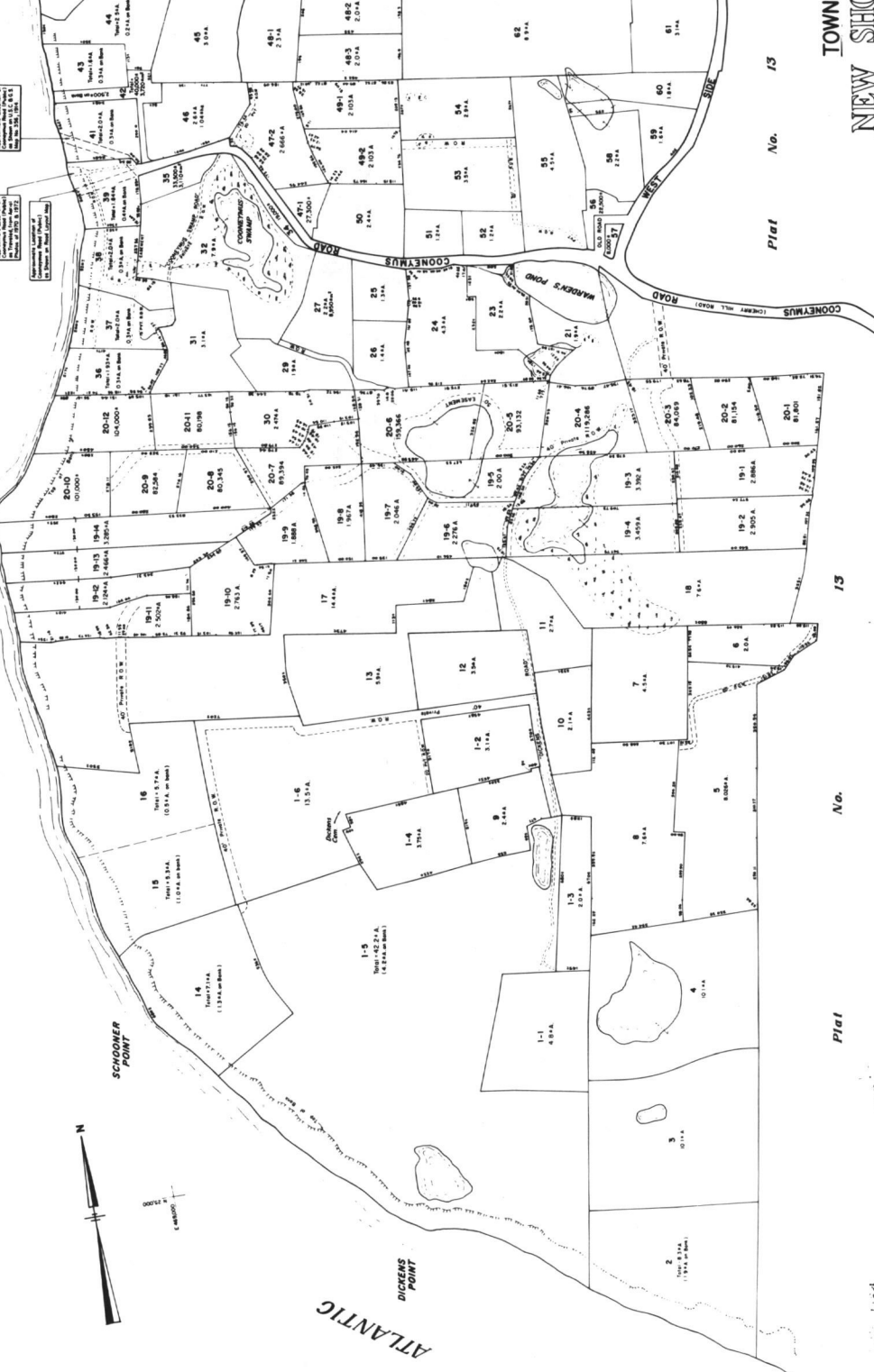
Plat No. 13

Plat No. 13

Plat No. 13

Plat No. 13

Plat No. 13



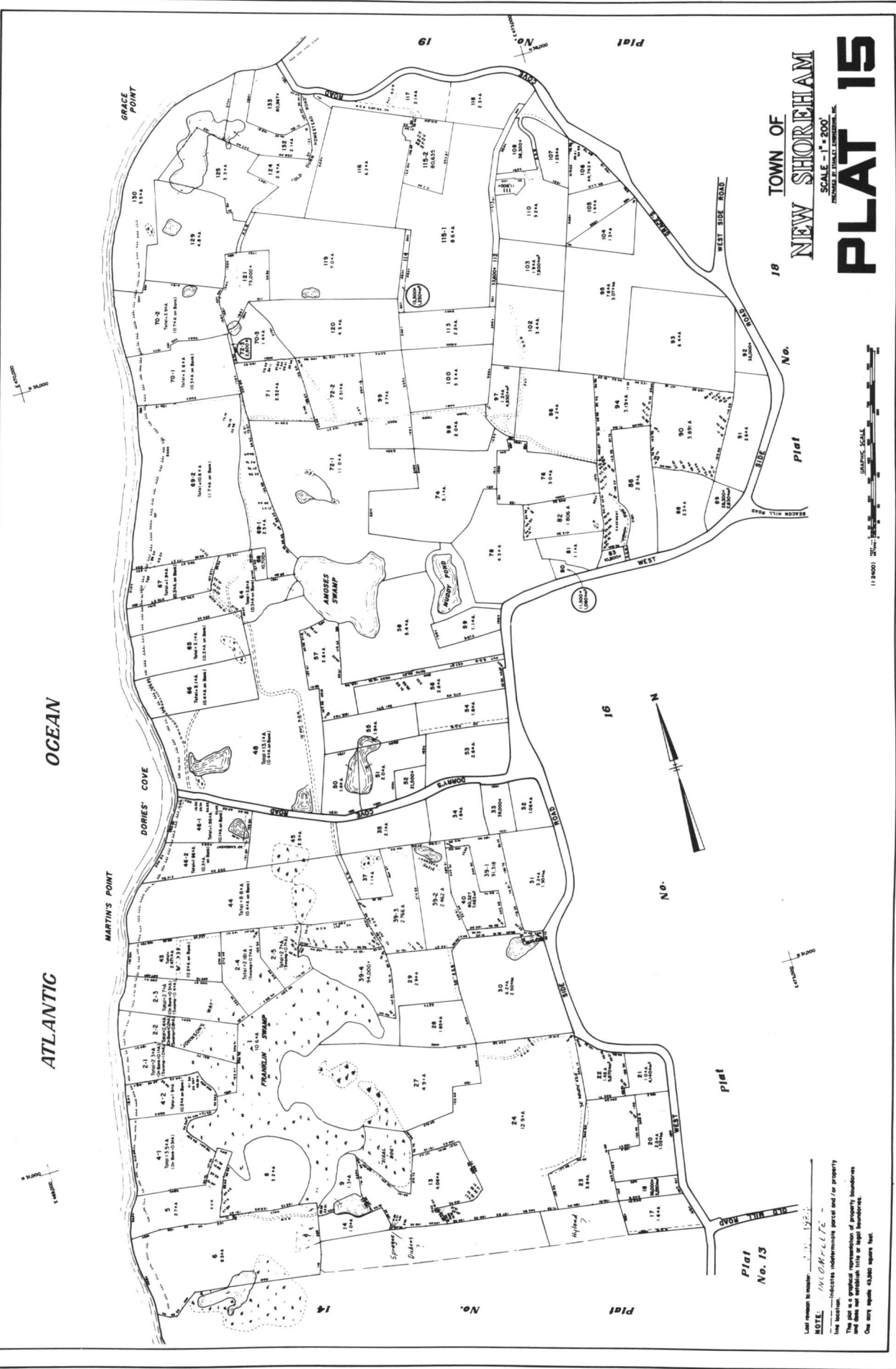
TOWN OF  
**NEW SHOREHAM**  
 SCALE - 1" = 200'  
**PLAT 14**

NOTE:  
 indicates adjacent parcel and/or  
 property line location.  
 The plat is a graphical representation of property boundaries  
 and does not constitute a deed or other instrument.  
 One acre equals 43,560 square feet.



ATLANTIC OCEAN

OCEAN

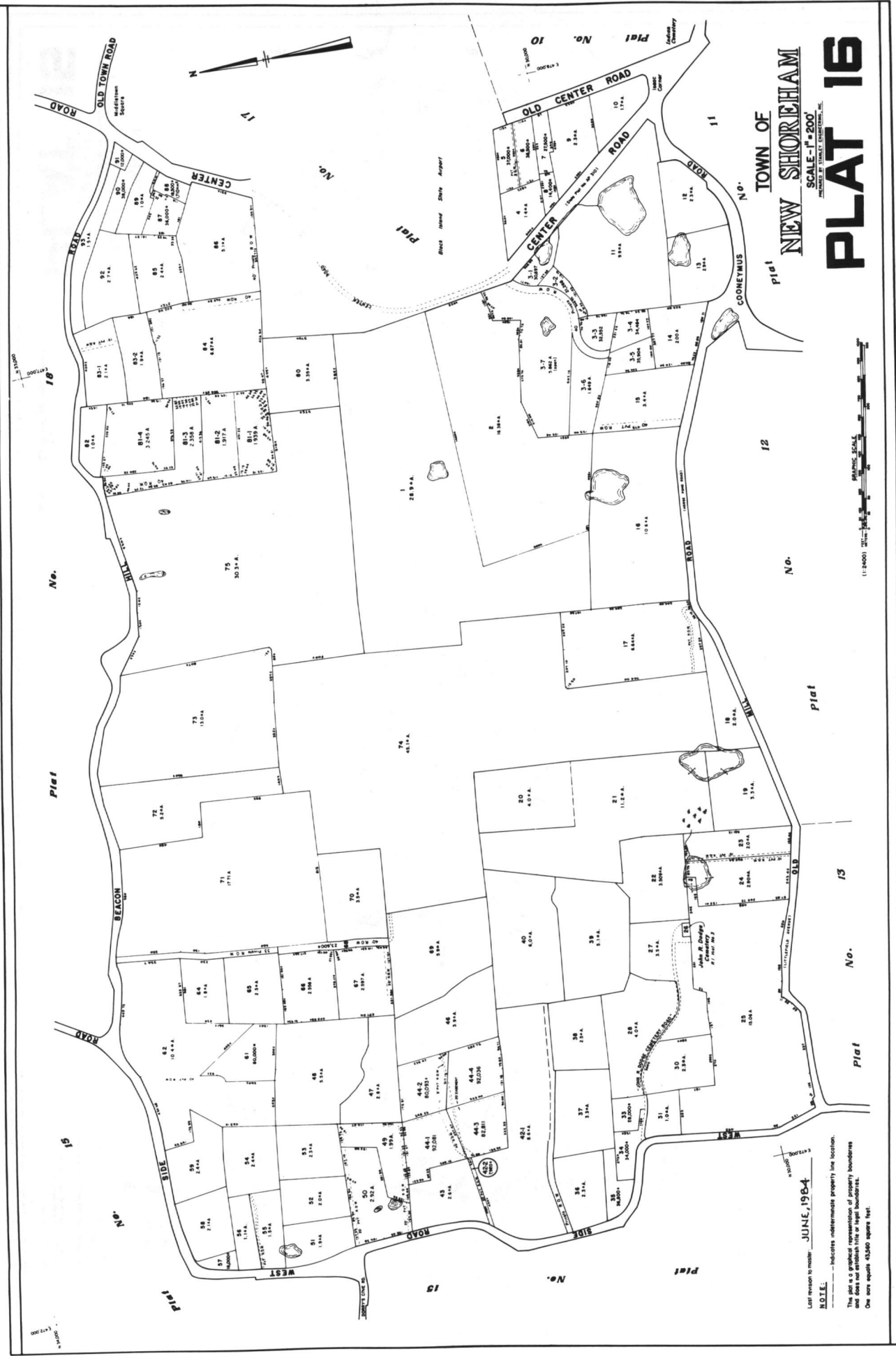


TOWN OF  
**NEW SHOREHAM**  
 SCALE - 1" = 200'  
 PREPARED BY STANTEC INC.

# PLAT 15

Last revision to map No. 1523  
**NOTE:** UNCORRECTED -  
 indicates undetermined parcel and/or property  
 line location.  
 This plat is a graphical representation of property boundaries  
 and does not constitute a title or legal instrument.  
 One acre equals 43,560 square feet.



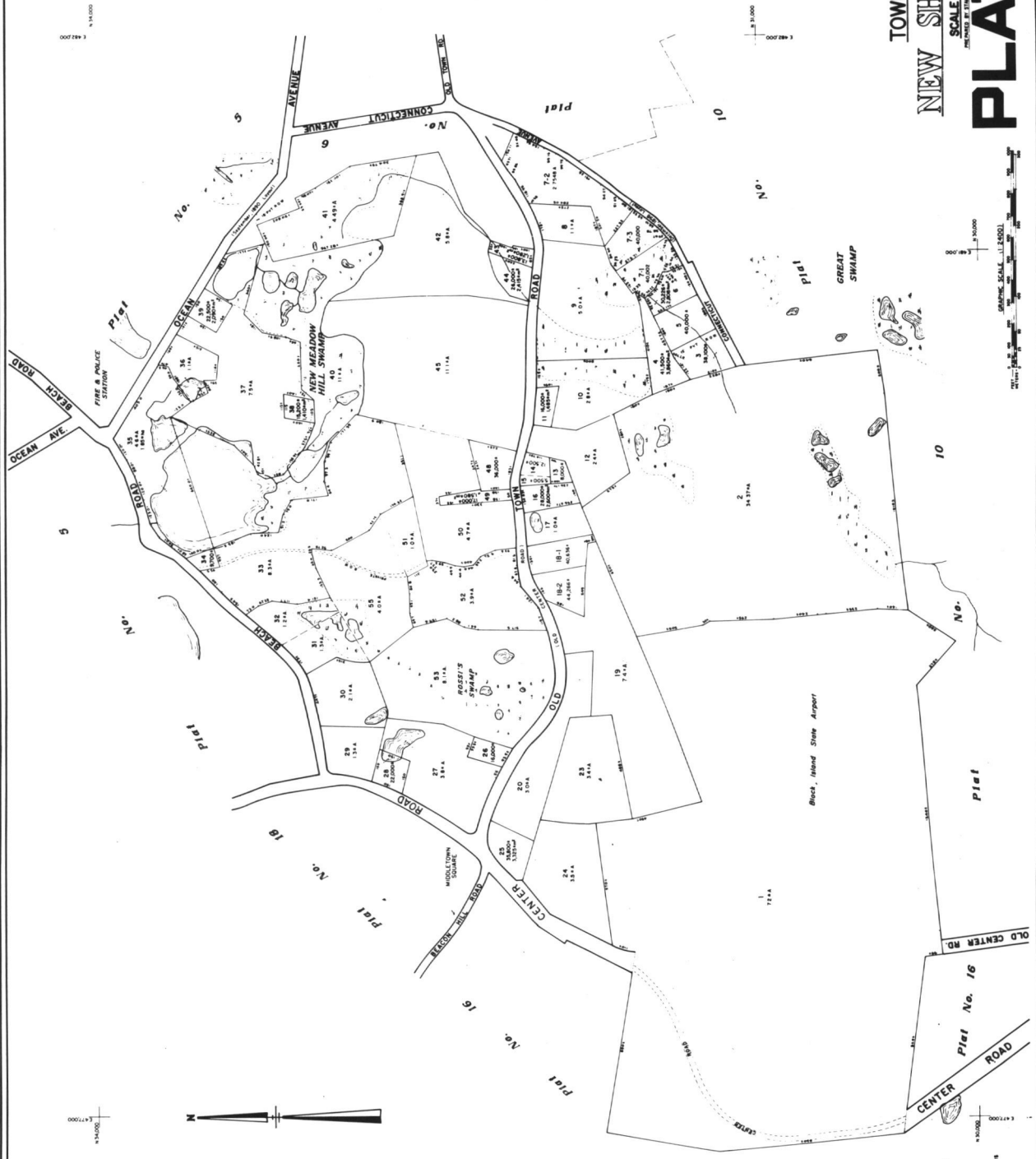


TOWN OF  
NEW SHOREHAM  
SCALE 1" = 200'  
PLAT 16

PLATING SCALE  
1" = 200'

LAST REVISION TO MAP: JUNE, 1984  
NOTE: — indicates intermediate property line location.  
This plat is a preliminary representation of property boundaries and does not establish title or legal boundaries.  
One acre equals 43,560 square feet.

TOWN OF  
**NEW SHOREHAM**  
 SCALE - 1" = 200'  
 PREPARED BY: TITMUS ENGINEERING, INC.  
**PLAT 17**



1" = 200'

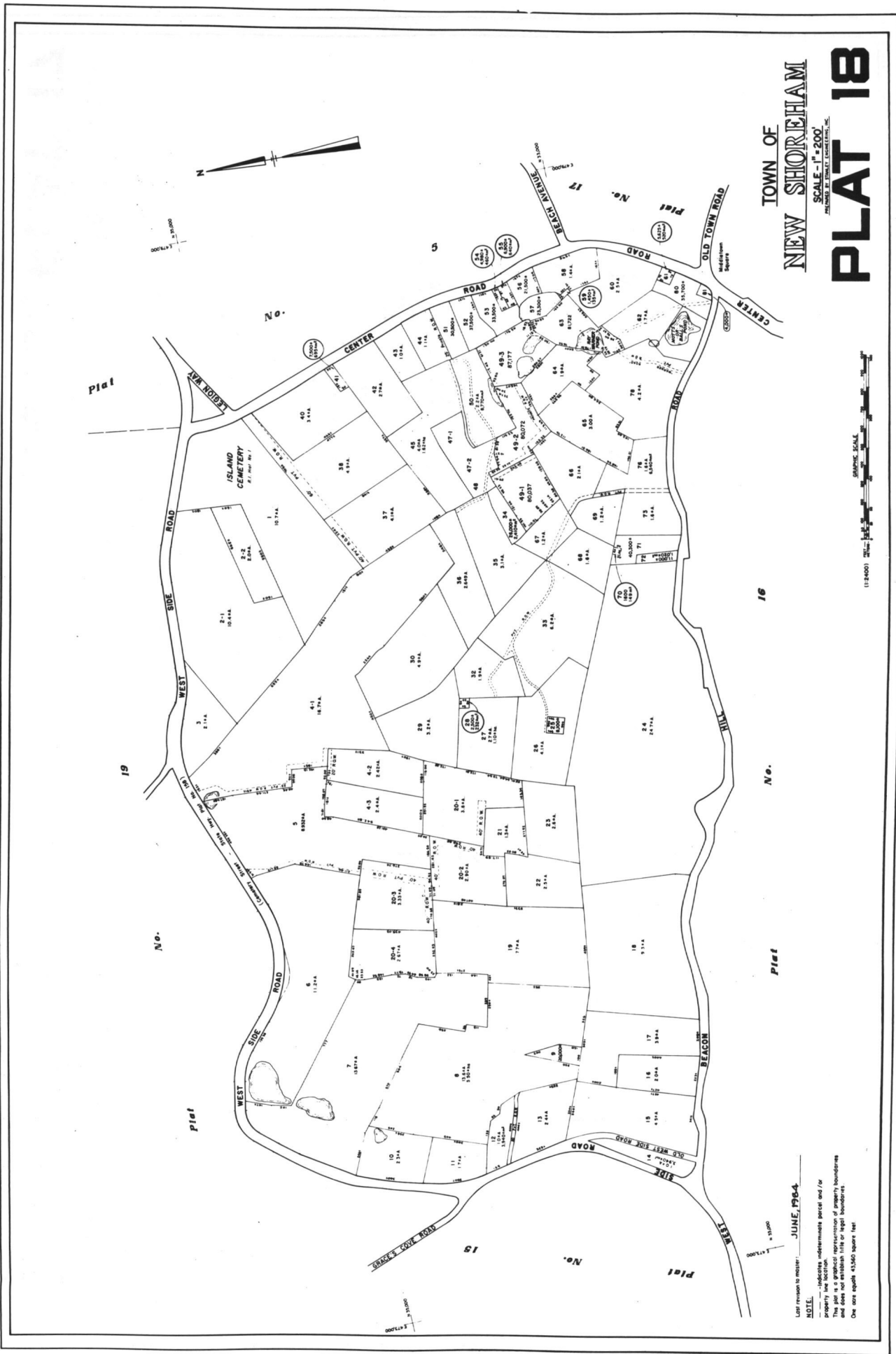
1" = 200'

1" = 200'

1" = 200'



Last revision to map: MARCH, 1963  
**NOTE:**  
 --- indicates approximate parcel and/or property line location.  
 The plat is a graphical representation of property boundaries and does not establish title or legal boundaries.  
 One acre equals 43,560 square feet.



TOWN OF  
NEW SHOREHAM

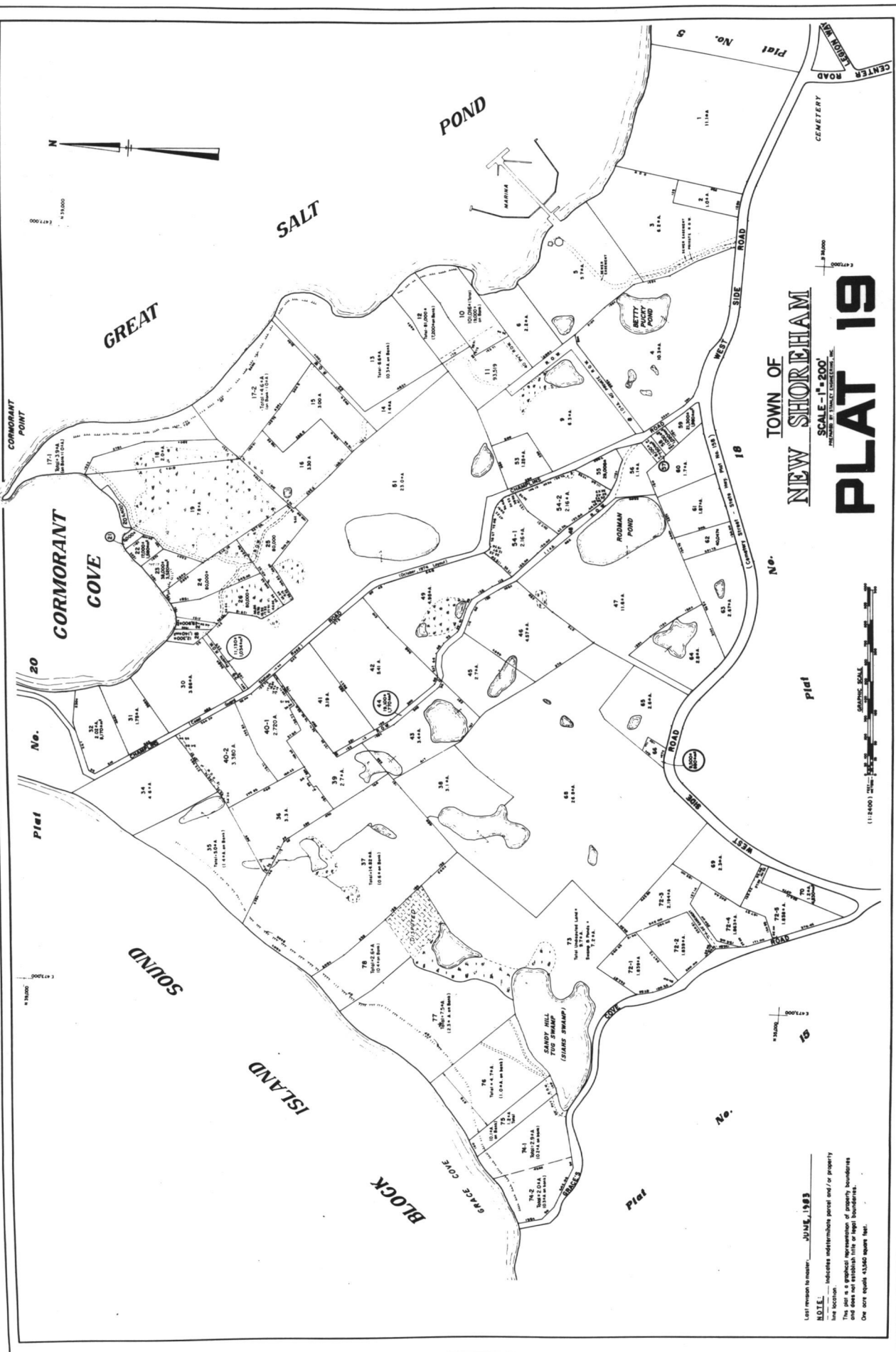
SCALE - 1" = 200'

PREPARED BY STANLEY ENGINEERING, INC.

**PLAT 18**

Last revision to master: JUNE, 1964  
**NOTE.**  
 --- indicates approximate parcel and/or property line location.  
 --- indicates approximate location of adjacent boundaries and does not establish 1/16" or 1/32" boundaries.  
 One acre equals 43,560 square feet.





TOWN OF  
NEW SHOREHAM  
SCALE - 1" = 200'  
PLAT 19

Let it remain to appear. JUNE, 1983

NOTE: indicates subdivisions parcel and/or property line location.

This plat is a graphical representation of property boundaries and does not constitute a title or legal boundaries.

One acre equals 43,560 square feet.



Plat No. 2

WEST BEACH

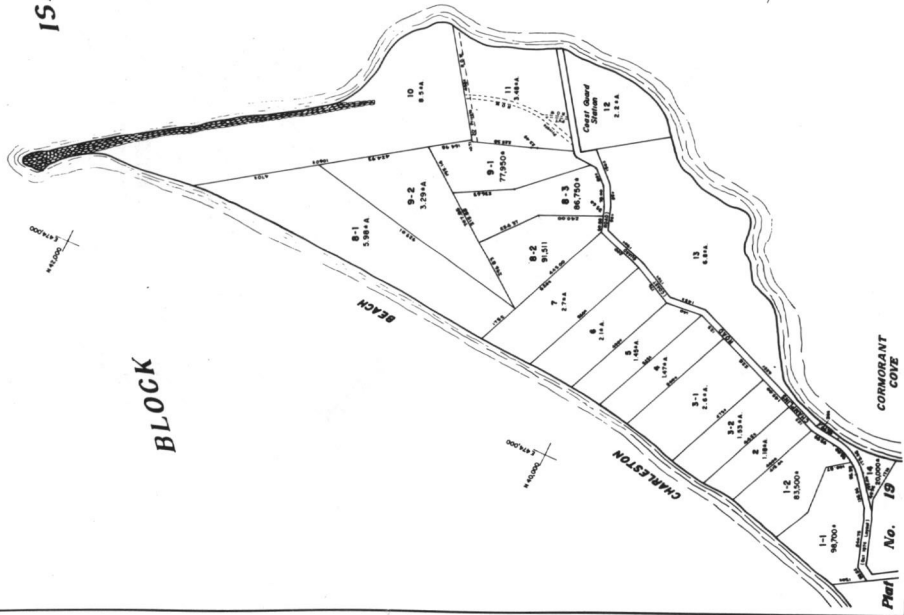


SOUND

ISLAND

BLOCK

NOTE:  
 This plat is a graphic representation of property boundaries  
 and does not indicate title or legal boundaries.  
 One acre equals 63,602 square feet.  
 All measurements are in feet.  
 Property line location: --- -- -- -- -- --  
 Lot front to water: ..... 1-2-1-3



TOWN OF  
 NEW SHOREHAM  
 SCALE - 1" = 200'  
 PLAT 20



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## Maps

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**THE RHODE ISLAND HISTORICAL PRESERVATION COMMISSION**

The Old State House  
150 Benefit Street  
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

(401)277-2678

The Honorable Bruce G. Sundlun  
Governor

Antoinette F. Downing  
Chairman

Frederick C. Williamson  
State Historic Preservation Officer

Edward F. Sanderson  
Executive Director  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

Author: Wm McKenzie Woodward

Review: Gerald F. Abbott, Block Island Historical Society  
Robert Downie, Block Island Historical Society  
Antoinette F. Downing, Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission  
Richard E. Greenwood, Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission  
Pamela A. Kennedy, Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission  
Walter A. Nebiker, Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission  
William Penn, Block Island Historic District  
Commission  
Edward F. Sanderson, Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission

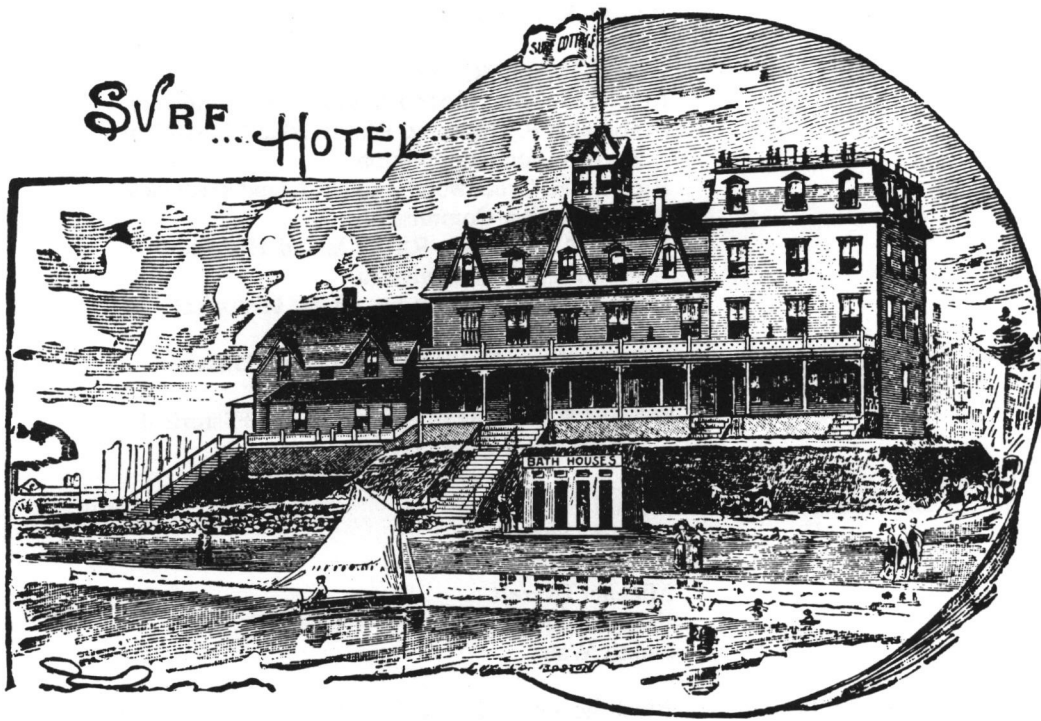
Survey and Research: Gerald F. Abbott  
Robert Downie  
David Everett  
Michael Everett  
Richard Greenwood  
Judith Watts

Photography and Graphics: Block Island Historical Society  
Rhode Island Historical Society  
Gerald F. Abbott  
Judith Watts  
Walter Nebiker  
Dana Ann Warren

Design and Layout: Elizabeth S. Warren

Word Processing: Ann Angelone

Printing: Des Offset



SURF HOTEL

SURF COTTAGE

BATH HOUSES