(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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Lying some ten miles off the Rhode Island mainland in the Atlantic Ocean, Block Island was first seen by the French explorer Verrazzano, but it was not until 1614 that the first Europeans—under the Dutch explorer Adrian Block—set foot on Block Island, then occupied by the Narragansett Indians. Actual white settlement began in 1662 with the arrival of sixteen families from the Massachusetts Colony, and ten years later, in 1672, the island was incorporated as the Town of New Shoreham under the jurisdiction of Rhode Island. But since there was no natural harbor on the island, the development of what is now known as the Old Harbor was concerned for over two centuries with the vital issue of providing for a suitable landing.

The new island population, being agrarian, had settled in the middle of the island to the South of the Great Salt Pond, and for the first two decades a makeshift landing was maintained on the east side, about a mile southeast of the present government breakwater. In 1680 a breachway was cut into the Great Salt Pond, but the problem of shifting sands soon caused this to be abandoned, and the islanders again turned to the island's east side where, in 1705, they built a pier near the foot of Dodge Street in the present day Old Harbor Village. The only public roads ran north and south to the east of the Great Salt Pond, over what includes Water Street and Spring Street at Old Harbor, and from the landing at Old Harbor to the interior of the island, over today's Dodge Street. West along this latter road a village of sorts formed, but while this village centered a mile from the landing, two houses from this era stand in Old Harbor where the two roads intersected at Dodge Street. Of the typical plain wooden, one-and-a-half-story, gable-roofed houses found on Block Island well into the beginning of the nineteenth century, the John Hooper House (Map # 11) dates from the mid-eighteenth century. A one-and-a-half-story house of similar type, the Andrew Dodge House (Map # 9) dates from the Federal period, and though small, has handsome symmetrical proportions. The windows are larger than those of the Hooper House, and it has a central classicizing entrance with sidelights, pilasters and entablature. Both these houses are now vacant and are in considerable disrepair.

The original 1705 pier of planked pilings, backed up with stones and boulders, had been destroyed in the Great Gale of 1815, and a new landing was provided simply by driving oaken piles into the shallow water below Water Street. The small and peculiar "Block Island boats" could moor here; capable of fishing miles offshore, these boats -- open two-masted lapstraked double-enders -- were nonetheless light enough to be pulled ashore when storms came up. So with a legitimate fishing industry developing, the harbor grew until fifty years later when there were over a thousand such poles, placed in rows, from which the name of Pole Harbor was derived. But such a primitive mode of landing was inadequate for the needs of the island, and chiefly through the efforts of the Hon. Nicholas Ball, State Representative from New Shoreham, funds were appropriated by the U. S. Congress to construct the present breakwater harbor between the south end of Crescent Beach and the rising terrain of the

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) - 1

STATE	Rhode Islan	nd '
COUNTY	Washington	. 1
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(Number all entries)

2. Location.

For the purposes of this National Register nomination, the Old Harbor Historic District includes all property within a 2,000 foot radius from the Village Square at the intersection of Water Street, High Street, and Spring Street, the center of said Square being at the statue therein.

7. Description cont.

southeastern part of the island. Built between 1870 and 1876 at a cost of \$155,000, two rip-rap breakwaters of heavy mainland granite, the major and outer extending 1500 feet to the north and the other extending 1000 feet to the east, form the Inner Harbor. An inner basin, constructed to protect the equipment engaged in building the breakwater, was intended to be dismantled but was left at the request of the islanders. Today, with only minor improvements, and the addition of a new ferry landing where the fish shacks were originally, the harbor and basin remain essentially unchanged.

The establishment of a National Harbor began a new era for Block Island. The first public house had been built in 1842, overlooking the landing on the site of the later Adrian Hotel (now the First Baptist Church) (Map # 25), and by the late 1850's three more were operating with combined accommodations for about 100. But it was the government breakwater, and the fact that large steamships could now make the island a stopping place, which fully opened Block Island; and the Harbor District, experiencing the bulk of this new growth, usurped from the old Town Centre relative dominance of the island and became one of the leading coastal resorts of the United States. Most resort facilities concentrated along Water Street and Dodge Street while other hotels and cottages were established on more spacious lots to the south along Spring Street and High Street, and a town square of sorts developed at the intersection of Water, High, and Spring Streets.

Second

The new affiliation with the mainland brought a domesticized sort of Empire style which lent a degree of architectural sophistication previously unknown on the island.

Nicholas Ball, an islander who had made his fortune in the California Gold Rush of the early 1850's and who had just previously been instrumental in bringing the government harbor to Block Island, erected overlooking the harbor the Ocean View, (Map # 32), perhaps the largest hotel in New England and architecturally the trend setter for Old Harbor. A plain though substantial three-story mansard structure 330 feet long capable of acccommodating over 500 guests, with a staff of nearly half that, it was burned to the ground in 1966 and its loss represents the single most important hiatus in the historic district. Surrounded by spacious sloping grounds, it dominated the hill to the south of the landing, and the promenade afforded by the veranda across the hotel's facade, together with its

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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7. Description cont.

extension as a boardwalk to the Annex (now the Shamrock Inn, Map #41), was fully 1,500 feet in length.

The Spring House together with the Annex (Map # 31) is the best preserved example of the full hotel as developed on Block Island. Built in 1852, it was considerably expanded during the early 1870's, including the construction of an annex set at right angles to the main building. Three stories high with a flared mansard, cupola, and full-length one-story veranda, it was second only to the Ocean View Hotel in size, being able to take about 250 guests. The ogee gables of the Annex were new architectural developments. About halfway between the Spring House and the landing, set back from the shore on High Street, is the Hotel Manisses, (Map # 26), rebuilt to its present appearance in 1882. Not so large as the Ocean View or Spring House, the Manisses was the best furnished. Architecturally similar to these, it is dominated by the projecting central tower with its pagoda cupola. Though the rear wing has now been condemmed, the main block of the Manisses is currently being restored. The Woonsocket House (now the Block Island Historical Society, Map # 22) at the corner of Dodge Street and Corn Neck Road is typical of the several less formal mansard. boarding houses built here in the 1870's.

More picturesque, with its mansard interrupted by three large gothic dormers, is the Surf Cottage (Map # 3) on Dodge Street, which dates from 1876. With two different additions to either side, a staggered effect of story height results which, effective on its siting at the beach's edge, is unified by a common veranda and a dominating cupola. The three gothic gables are used again on the Gothic Cottage (Map # 8), also on Dodge Street. 1886 saw the introduction of the "Queen Anne" Style in the lavish, though modestly sized, Adrian Hotel, (Map # 25) located on Spring Street near the Square. This latter building was unfortunately extensively remodeled in 1952 in a manner quite unsympathetic with its original design, as the new home of the First Baptist Church. The Perry Cottage (Map # 18) on High Street, also altered, is another example, though less sophisticated, of the Queen Anne style.

The City Drug Store (Map # 39) on the Square at the intersection of High, Spring, and Water Streets, another typically mansarded structure, is noteworthy for its unusual two-story porch with detailing that completely dominates the building. Opposite is the Old Roller Skating Rink (Map #38) more recently the Empire Theatre, constructed near the end of the nineteenth century; though in only fair condtion, it remains well preserved. Later shops along Water Street are more urban, with large plainer blocks fronting more directly on the street line, and with ornamentation more strictly textural.

Resort growth had peaked by the 1890's and thus the Queen Anne and Shingle Styles were never firmly established. Morton's Cottage (Map # 37)

Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) - 3

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(Number all entries) 7. Description cont.

on Water Street, the best example of the Shingle Style, was completely rebuilt in the early part of this century when it was converted into use The opening of the Great Salt Pond as the New Harbor in 1900 ·led to the construction of a few resort buildings in that vicinity and the establishment of a cable car connection between the two harbors, with a branch to the bath houses on Crescent Beach where the present State Beach facilities are. Chapel Street had been opened in 1885 with the erection of the First Baptist Church (Map # 1), later burned. And about the turn of the century, the Roman Catholic Church (Map # 2) designed in a simplified classic revival style was also built on Chapel Street; otherwise. the street remained largely undeveloped. A fire at the outset of the twentieth century on Water Street severely damaged the National Hotel (Map # 32), Narragansett Hotel (Map # 33), and Ocean Cottage (Map # 34), but they were rebuilt by 1910, all retaining the earlier vernacular mansard mode which still dominated Old Harbor architecture, although the Ocean. Cottage, renamed the New Shoreham, has been considerably altered in more recent years.

World War I brought the decline of the resort, and with the subsequent Depression and World War II, Old Harbor never recovered its earlier status. Today the island is experiencing a resurgence as a summer vacation spot, particularly with the construction on the island of a state airport in 1950. Water Street has suffered mostthrough the years because of disuse and more recently from unsympathetic renovation. Fire has taken its toll as well, most notably the Ocean View Hotel and the First Baptist Church. But the district has remained essentially intact from the turn of the century

Selective Inventory of Structures of Special Historic and Architectural Value

Map No.	Street, Name, Date
1 2	Chapel Street Site of First Baptist Church Saint Andrews Roman Catholic Church, c.1900
3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11	Dodge Street Surf Hotel, 1876 Blue Dory Inn, c.1870 Drug Store, c.1870 Olsen's Cottage, c.1875 Rose Store, c.1875 Gothic Cottage, c.1880 Andrew Dodge House, c.1800 Leslie Dodge House (The Gables Inn), c.1860 J. Hooper House, c.1750 Mansard House, c.1875 (Winheld Podge Mar)

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

COUNTY

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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Map No.	Street, Name, Date
13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21	High Street House, c.1870 Union Hotel, 1883 Hartford Hotel, c.1880 Mitchell Cottage, c.1865 Masonic Lodge, c.1876 Perry Cottage, c.1890 Bellevue Hotel, c.1885 Eureka Hotel, c.1880 Highland House, c.1890
22 23 24	Main Street Woonsocket House (Block Island Historical Society), c.1875 Woonsocket House Annex (Block Island Inn), c.1880 The Yellow Kittens, c.1890 Spring Street
25 26 27 28 29 30 31	Adrian Hotel (First Baptist Church), 1886 Hotel Manisses, 1882 1661 Inn, c.1870 Rose Cottage, c.1880 Atlantic Hotel (Norwich Hotel), c.1880 House, c.1885 Spring House and Annex, 1852/c.1872
32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40 41 42	Water Street New National Hotel, 1888/1904 Narragansett Hotel, c.1875/c.1908 Ocean Cottage (New Shoreham Hotel), c.1875/c.1910 Pequot House, 1882 Odd Fellows Hall, 1872 Morton's Cottage (Dept. Store), c.1890 Roller Skating Rink (Empire Theatre), c.1880 City Drug Store, c.1880 C. C. Ball General Store, c.1880 Shamrock Inn (Ocean View Annex), c.1875 Site of Ocean View Hotel

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

During the 200 years prior to the development of resort facilities, Block Island was basically a self-sufficient community, dependent upon farming and fishing for its economy, isolated from the mainland and its culture. Old Harbor's significance lies chiefly in its transformation from a landing site for this early community and modest fishing hamlet, to one of the most popular resorts in America.

The home of the "ablest sea-going undecked craft in the world", as the Block Island boat was then termed, Pole Harbor became a significant processing center for swordfish, tuna, mackeral and cod. But by 1867 Congress had recognized the necessity of providing a harbor of refuge here near the entrance of Long Island Sound, and the construction of the breakwater at Old Harbor was to be the most important factor to the development of New Shoreham. As early as 1870, the island was being celebrated as the "Bermuda of the North", far from the "malarial and contaminating land breezes", and yet within a fivehour sail from New York or Boston and only two hours from Newport and New London. With its "health giving qualities of breezes laden with sulphates of magnesium and potassium, chloride of sodium, bromine, iodine, and others of nature's remedies distilled fresh from the ocean laboratories", Old Harbor's development paralleled those of the Isles of Shoals off the New Hampshire coast, and Mt. Desert Island off the Maine coast. So while the island had begun to develop its recreational potential as early as the middle of the nineteenth century, by the 1880's its reputation as an elegant Victorian resort was established.

Old Harbor was the only considerable village, with most of the hotels and stores, the postoffice and telegraph station, the mechanic shops, the halls and saloons, facilities for sailing and sport fishing, bowling, tennis, golf, and the like. A boardwalk ran to the bathing pavilion at Crescent Beach, and when the New Harbor was opened up in 1900 in the Great Salt Pond, a railway connected the two harbors with a spur running to the beach. In a two-month summer season, old Harbor was accommodating in more than thirty hotels and cottages 3,000 visitors, nearly triple the year-round population of the island. The Spring House, the largest of the hotels left, could take more than 250 guests at a time, and on its 25 acres of land offered tennis courts, a baseball field, and the Mineral Springs.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) - 5

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(Number all entries) 8. Significance cont.

Recently, the island has undergone a changing economy and is once again becoming a popular summer vacation area. Old Harbor is still the only considerable village and remains sharply defined, as a geographical district, amidst the sprawling farm cottages of the countryside. As part of a proposed Islands System, zoning on Block Island would restrict most new development to the area around Old Harbor and the Town Center. And while the Old Harbor District could accommodate some future development, the immediate threat is the present lack of sympathy to its fine architectural heritage.

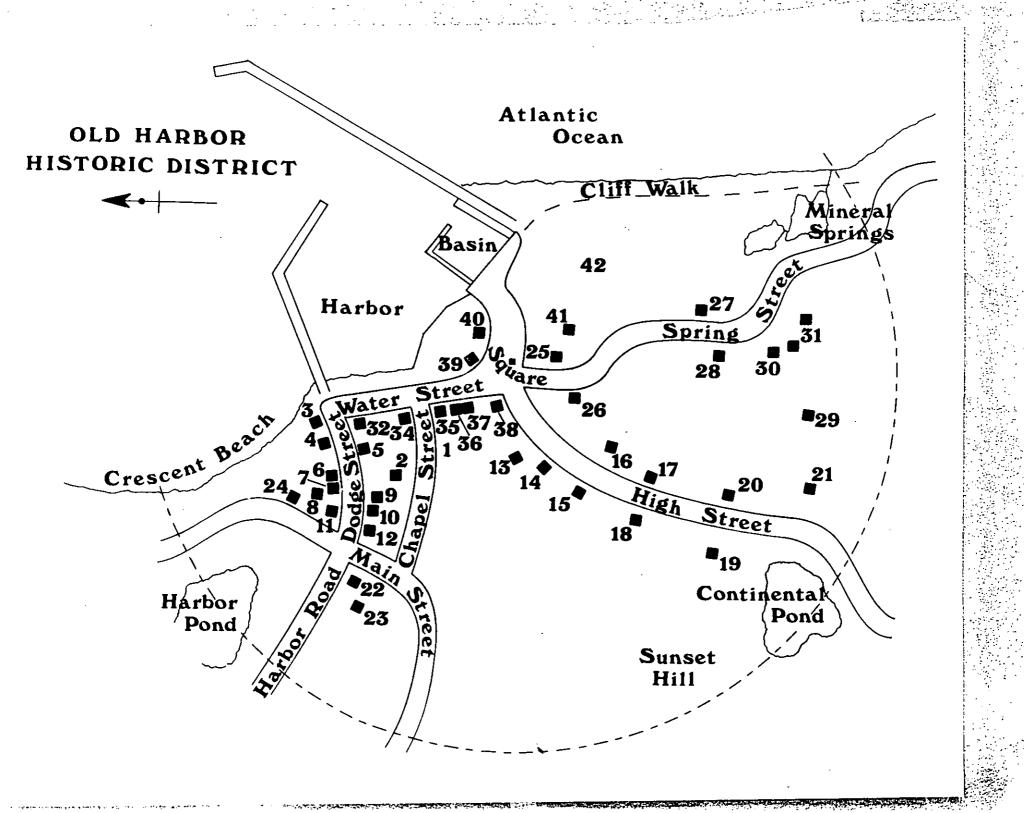
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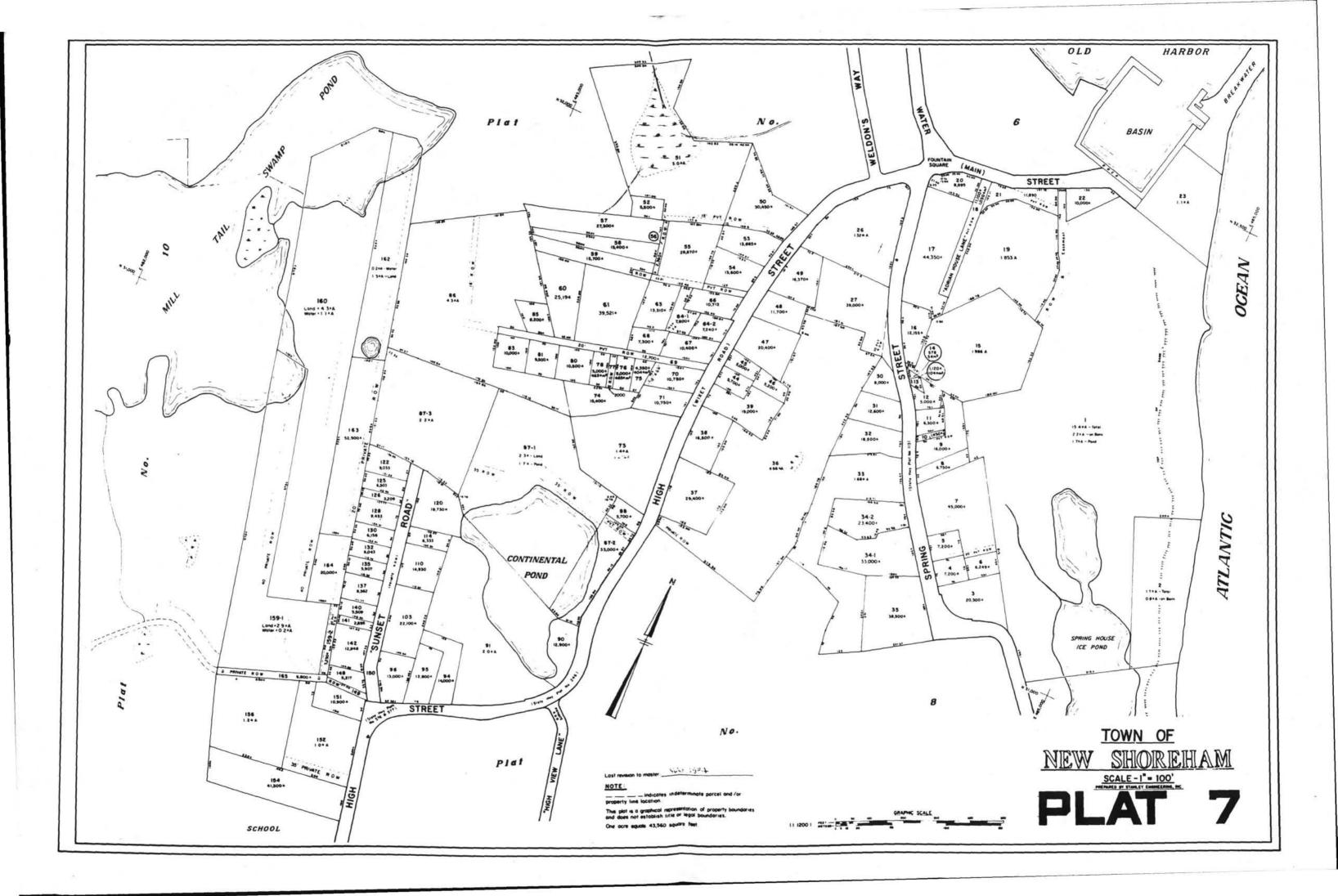
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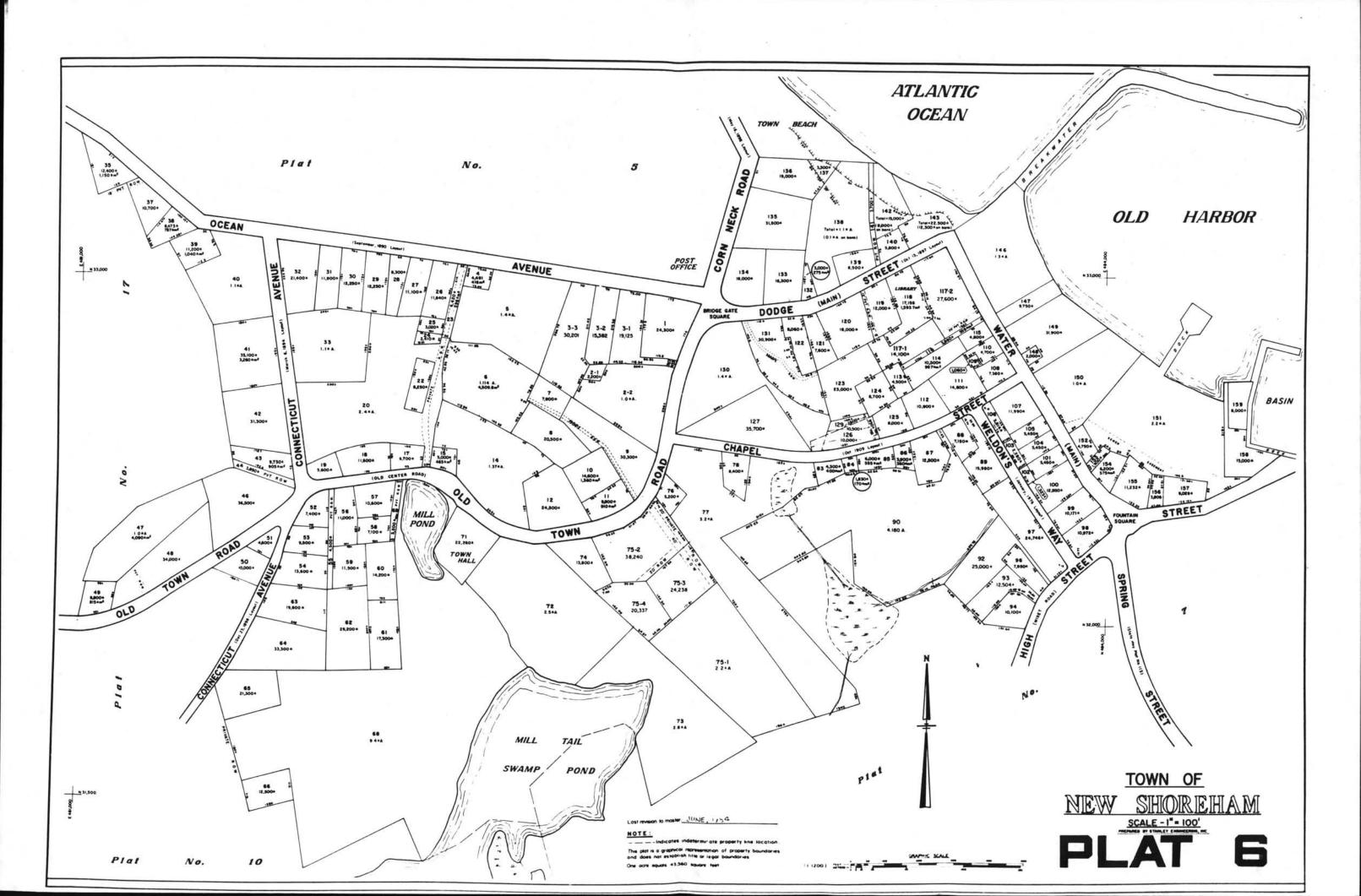
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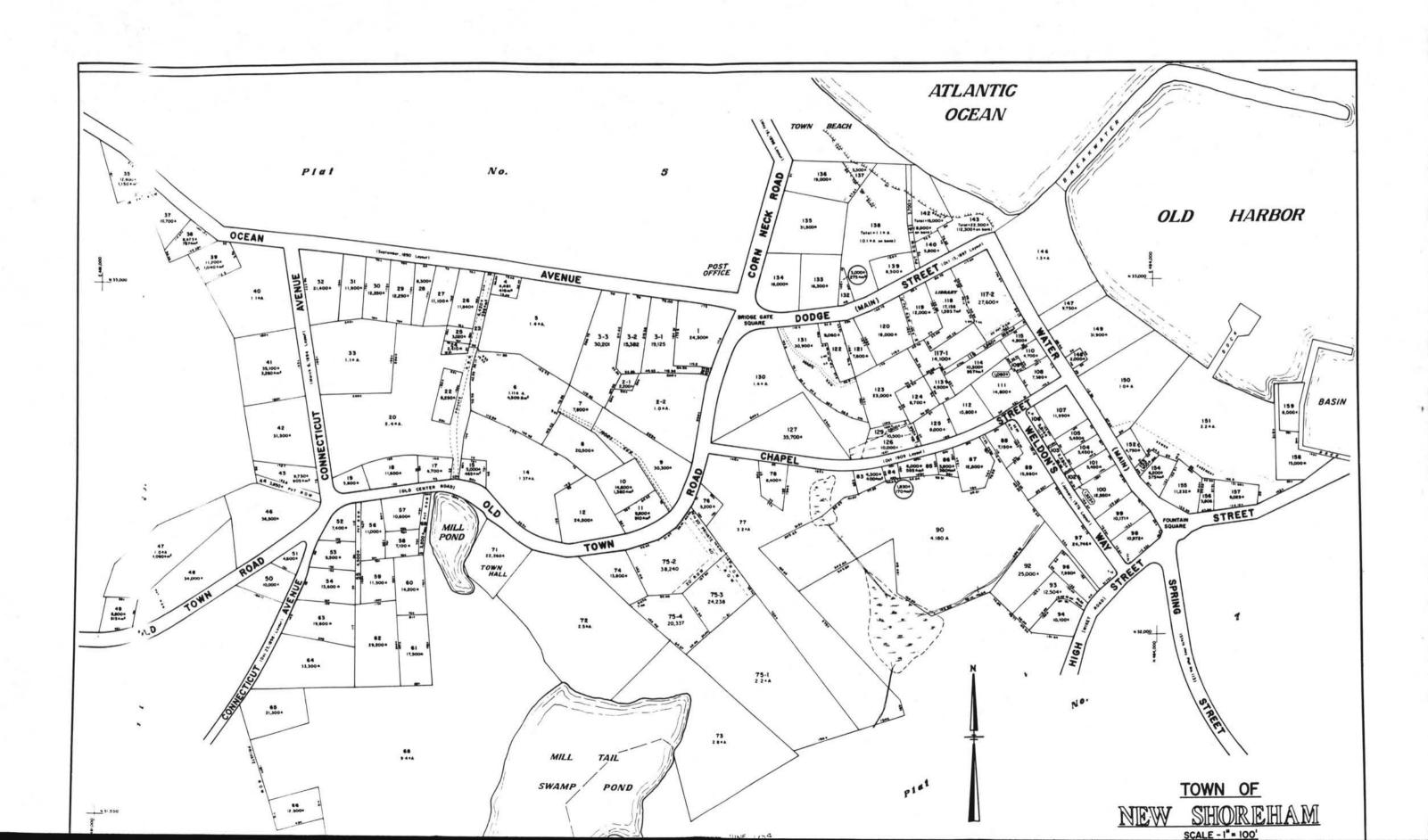
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FORM 10-301 (6/72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

1. NAME		
соммон	AND/OR HISTORIC	NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS)
Old Harbor Historic District		
2. LOCATION		
STATE	COUNTY	TOWN
Rhode Island	Washington	New Shoreham
STREET AND NUMBER	7	
See continuation sheet 1.		
3. PHOTO REFERENCE		
PHOTO CREDIT James Gibbs	April 1974	Preservation Commission,
James Gibbs	APILI 1974	52 Power St., Providence, R.
4. IDENTIFICATION		

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

View from the southeast toward the Surf Hotel (1876), Dodge Street.



FORM 10-301 A (6/72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

1. NAME		
COMMON	AND/OR HISTORIC	NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS)
Old Harbor Historic District		
2. LOCATION	4.	
STATE	COUNTY	TOWN
Rhode Island	Washington	New Shoreham
See continuation sheet 1.		
3. PHOTO REFERENCE		
PHOTO CREDIT	DATE	NEGATIVE FILED AT R.I. Historica
James Gibbs	April 1974	Preservation Commission, 52 Power St., Providence, R
4. IDENTIFICATION		

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

View from the northwest toward the Andrew Dodge House (c. 1800), Dodge Street.





(6/72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

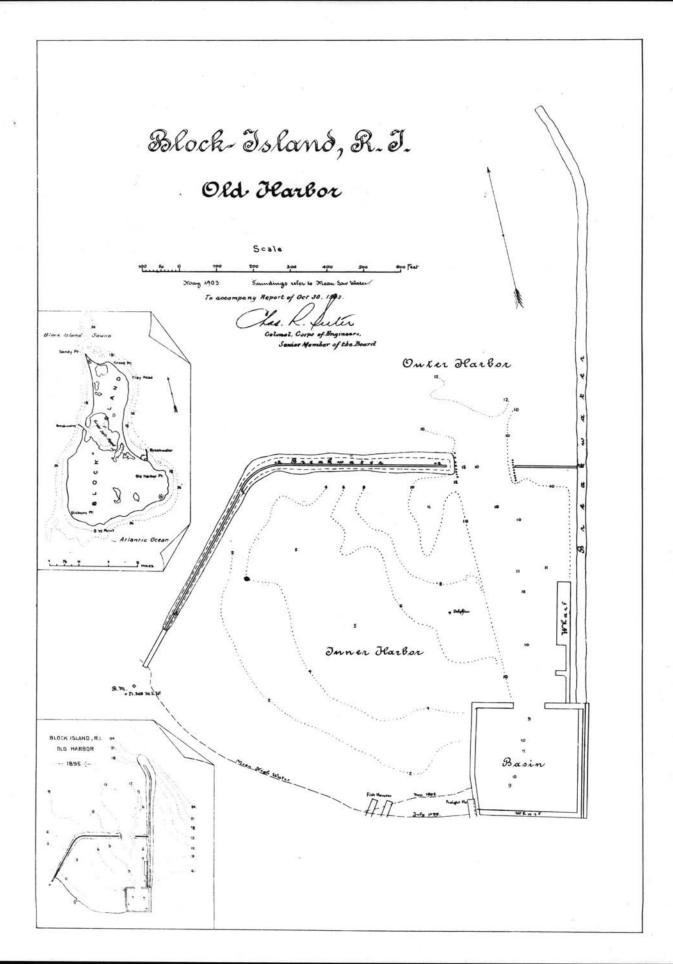
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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Old Harbor Historic I	istrict	
2. LOCATION		
STATE	COUNTY	TOWN
Rhode Island	Washington	New Shoreham
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View from the southeast toward the Hotel Manisses (1882), Spring Street.



Form 10-301 (Dec. 1968)

2. North arrow.

3. Latitude and longitude reference.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY MAP FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

Rhode Island

county

Washington

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER DATE

	COMMON:	Old Harbor Historia	c District		
	AND/OR HISTO				
2.	LOCATION				
	STREET AND	NUMBER: See continuation si	heet 1.		
i Gr	CITY OR TOWN	New Shoreham	44		
-	STATE:	Rhode Island	44	COUNTY: Washington	co
3.	MAP REFEREN	NCE		1	
	SOURCE:	U.S. House of Repre	esentative:	s	
	SCALE: Pri	nted on map			
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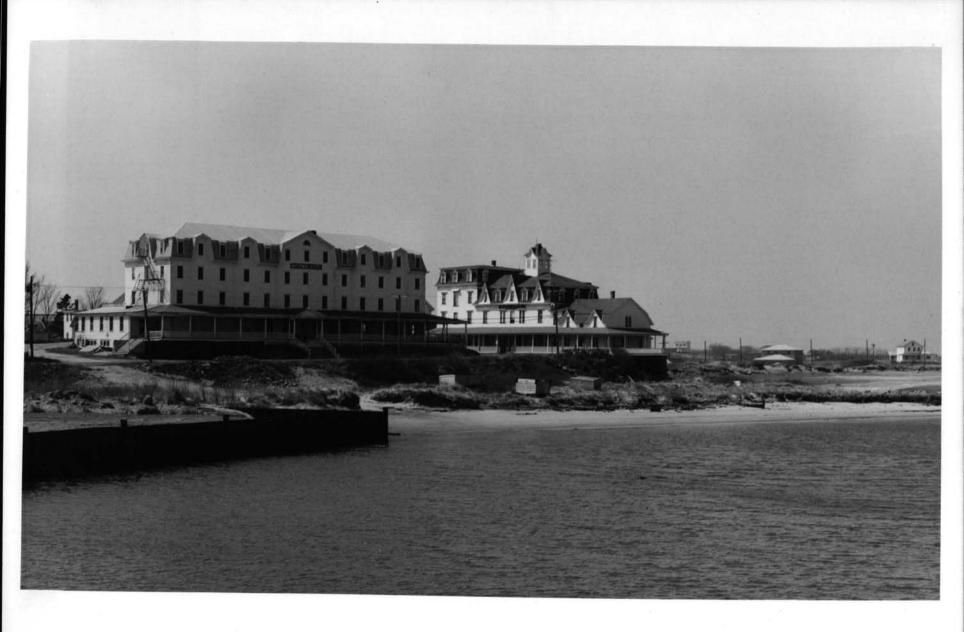
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

1. NAME		
COMMON	AND/OR HISTORIC	NUMERIC CODE (Acadened by NPS)
Old Harbor Historic I	District	
2. LOCATION	•	
Rhode Island	Washington	New Shoreham
See continuation sheet	et 1.	
James Gibbs	April 1974	Preservation Commission, 52 Power St., Providence, R.
4. IDENTIFICATION		
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ET	С.	

View from the northeast toward the Gothic Cottage (c.1880), Dodge Street.



4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

Old Harbor Historia District

1. NAME

COMMON

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

AND/OR HISTORIC

PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or en close with photograph)

2. LOCATION		
STATE	COUNTY	TOWN
Rhode Island	Washington	New Shoreham
See continuation shee	et 1.	
See continuation shee 3. PHOTO REFERENCE PHOTO CREDIT	et 1.	NEGATIVE FILED AT R.I. Historica

View from the southeast toward Water Street, including on the left the New National Hotel (c.1875/c.1908) and on the right the Surf Hotel (1876).

NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS)



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or en close with photograph)

COMMON	AND/OR HISTORIC	NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS)
Old Harbor Historic District		
2. LOCATION		
STATE	COUNTY	TOWN
Rhode Island	Washington	New Shoreham
See continuation sheet 1.		
See continuation sheet 1. 3. PHOTO REFERENCE		
	DATE	NEGATIVE FILED AT D. T. Us chowing
3. PHOTO REFERENCE	April 1974	Preservation Commission, 52 Power St., Providence, R.I

View from the south toward the City Drug Store (c. 1880), Water Street.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

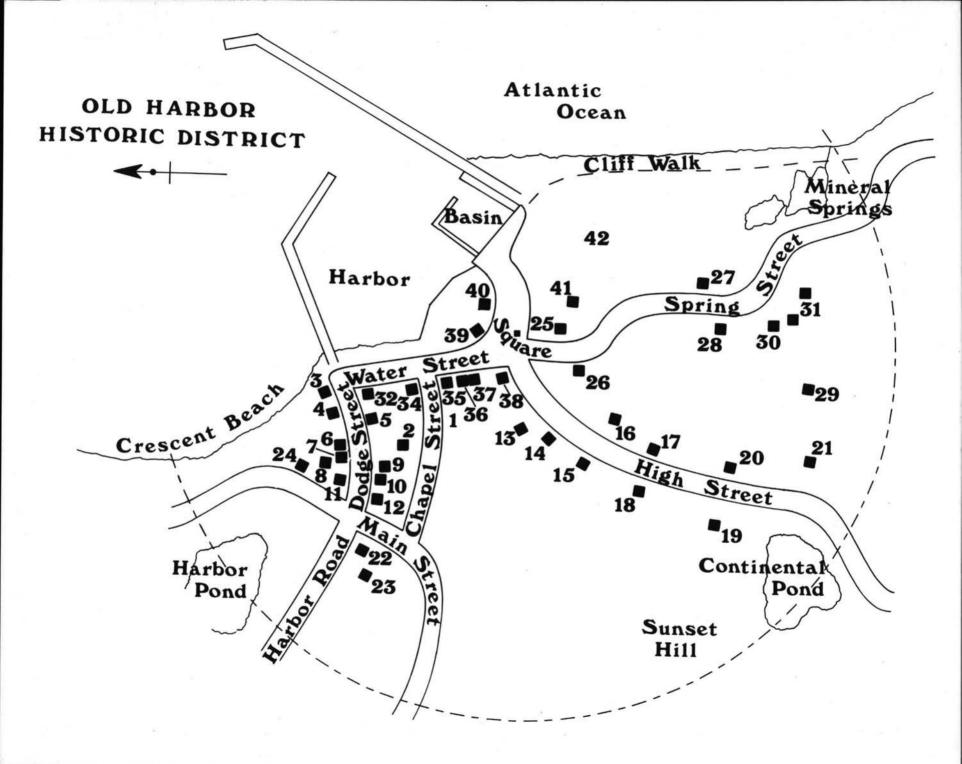
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

1. NAME		
Old Harbor Historic District	AND/OR HISTORIC	NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS)
2. LOCATION		
Rhode Island	Washington	New Shoreham
See continuation sheet 1.		
3. PHOTO REFERENCE	4	
PHOTO CREDIT	DATE	NEGATIVE FILED AT R.I. Historical
James Gibbs	April 1974	Preservation Commission, 52 Power St., Providence, RI
4. IDENTIFICATION		

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

View from the northwest toward the Spring House (1852/c.1872), Spring Street.



Form No. 10-301 Rev. 7-72

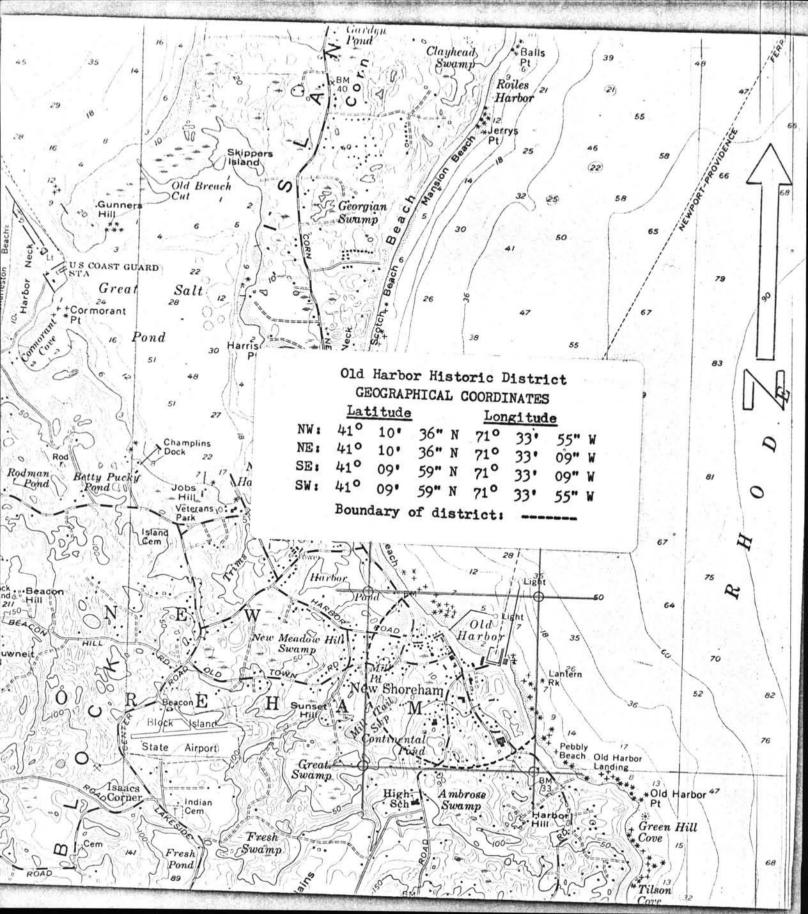
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY MAP FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

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COMMON: Old	Harbor Histori	c District		
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James Gibbs,	Rhode Island	Historical	Preservation Commissi	
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4. REQUIREMENTS				
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TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MA		9		
TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAI	where required.			
1. Property broundaries of the North arrow.	where required.			



Form 10-301 (Dec. 1968)

2. North arrow.

3. Latitude and longitude reference.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY MAP FORM

STATE Rhode Island COUNTY Washington FOR NPS USE ONLY

COMMON: U	ld Harbor Historic Dis	strict		
AND/OR HIST	ORIC:			
2. LOCATION				
STREET AND		uation Sheet #1	L	
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3. MAP REFERE	NCE			
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