

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Westford Town Farm (preferred)

other names/site number Poor Farm, Westford Home, Westford Infirmary

2. Location

street & number 35 Town Farm Road not for publication

city or town Westford vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Middlesex code 017 zip code 01886

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Brona Simon January 24, 2008
Signature of certifying official/Title Brona Simon Date
Massachusetts Historical Commission, State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Westford Town Farm
Name of Property

Middlesex, MA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing Noncontributing

_____ 1 _____ building

_____ sites

_____ structures

_____ objects

_____ 1 _____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic: Institutional Housing

Agriculture

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Victorian Eclectic

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick, stone: granite

walls brick, wood

roof asphalt

other synthetics: vinyl

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Westford Town Farm
Name of Property

Middlesex, MA
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Agriculture
- Community Planning & Development
- Architecture
- Health/Medicine
- Social History

Period of Significance

1837-1958

Significant Dates

1893 1900 1903

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Daniel W. Hartwell, builder
H.M. Francis, architect of 1900 block

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Fletcher Library, Westford

Westford Town Farm
Name of Property

Middlesex, MA
County, State

10. Geographical Data

Acree of Property less than one acre

UTM References See continuation sheet.

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. 19	296580	4717660	3.		
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
2.			4.		
Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sanford Johnson, consultant, with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date January 2008

street & number 220 Morrissey Boulevard telephone 617-727-8470

city or town Boston state MA zip code 02125

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Town of Westford, MA

street & number 55 Main Street telephone 978-692-5515

city or town Westford state MA zip code 01886

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Westford Town Farm
Westford (Middlesex), MA

Section number 7 Page 1

7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Setting

The Westford Town Farm, built in 1837 and enlarged ca. 1840 and ca. 1900, is in a rural section with fields, open land, and the former Boston & Maine Railroad right of way to the south. West of the building is a wooded hillside lined at the street by a dry laid granite slab retaining wall dating to the 19th century (this is no longer part of the property). Property adjacent to the building's north side is occupied by the Westford Fire Department, and contains a fire station, sheds, and a concrete building for fire suppression practice activities. These are not part of the Town Farm property. Land south of the Town Farm is wooded with Stony Brook traversing in a southwest to northeast direction.

Exterior

The former Town Farm, built in 1837, is a five by six-bay, 2½ story, gable-roofed brick building (**Photo 1**) with elements of the Greek Revival style, and a secondary block consisting of a Victorian Eclectic style wood-frame, vinyl-clad addition, attached to the north elevation (**Photo 2**). The vinyl siding does not compromise the overall integrity of the Town Farm. The main brick block has a split granite slab foundation and is oriented with the gable end to the road. The street elevation has five 6/9 double-hung windows and a door offset (**Photo 12**) to the south on the first story. Openings have plain trim with heavy split granite lintels and sills, while the six-panel door has a five-pane transom and simple hardware. The second story is lit by five 6/9 sash, also with plain trim and granite lintels and sills. The gable peak has two similar sash. Fenestration is symmetrically placed with the exception of the off-center door. The full width of the street elevation is covered on both stories by a wood-frame porch comprised of square posts with chamfered corners, turned balusters in the railing, and round finials at the lower level entrance in front of the off-center door. Probably designed as a fire escape, the porch has two integral stairways rising in opposite directions across the building. Access to the second story of the porch is through a central window. Granite piers support the porch at ground level, and a metal railing exists at the third level and was probably added after initial construction.

The symmetrical five-bay façade of the brick block is on the eave side and faces north. Partially covered by the Victorian wood-frame addition, the façade has a center entry (**Photo 4**) with a modern gabled hood and sidelights. Windows are similar to those on the west elevation with 6/9 sash, granite lintels, and sills. Eave trim on the façade is a molded cornice with the gable returns concealed by the second-story roof of the porch.

The south elevation (**Photo 3**) has five symmetrically placed windows on both stories, also with granite lintels and sills. A cellar window near the southwest corner of the granite foundation also has a granite lintel. The south elevation shares the molded cornice with the north side façade. Access to the cellar is through a bulkhead trimmed with split granite located near the southeast corner. Some openings contain air conditioners and storm windows. The broad gabled roof is clad in asphalt shingles and has a single gabled dormer with gable returns on either slope, and a brick chimney near the west end of the plan. The rear or east elevation (**Photo 6**) is enlarged by a modern, wood-frame, shed-roofed addition of one story.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Westford Town Farm
Westford (Middlesex), MA

Section number 7 Page 2

The north-facing façade of the brick block is partially covered by a 2½ story, side-gabled wood frame, vinyl-clad Victorian Eclectic-style addition that faces west and functions as a secondary façade (**Photo 2**). The addition, built ca. 1900 on a ca. 1840 stone foundation, creates a roughly L-shaped plan. The principal elevation of the Victorian addition has four 2/2 double-hung windows with no trim and a center entry at the first story. The entry (**Photo 4**) is covered by a hip-roofed hood supported by carved brackets. A series of modern wood frame ramps connect this to the entrance in the brick block. The second story of the addition has five symmetrically placed 2/2 sash, also without trim due to the application of vinyl siding.

The north elevation of the two-story Victorian addition (**Photo 5**) has a one-story shed-roofed addition on the first story that conceals the fenestration. The second story of the north elevation has four 2/2 sash below a single sash in the gable peak. Some openings contain air conditioners and storm windows. The only visible trim remaining on the addition other than the entry hood is the gable returns, all other detail having been covered by modern siding material. The roof of the 1900 addition is marked by a single gabled dormer with four-pane double-hung sash and a closed gable as well as two stout brick chimneys. The shed-roofed block is without ornament and appears to have been built ca. 1950. This contains two modern double-hung sash and a modern metal door, all without trim.

Interior

The main entry in the north elevation of the brick block leads to a central hallway and stairs (**Photo 7**) with plain railing and simple square newel post. The plan includes two rooms at the street side and three at the rear with the stairs between. Window and door trim on the interior of the first floor retains some indication of 19th century molding profiles with beaded corners, although walls have been resurfaced with paneling in many places. Two fireplace surrounds, possibly from the original construction, remain in the two front rooms and demonstrate Classical proportions but have simplified molding and detail. The second floor also has two rooms at the street side of the plan and three at the rear with the hallway between. Window and door trim here is simpler than on the first floor. The third floor of the brick block has a plastered interior, suggesting it was used for living quarters. Large sections of interior finish consist of modern materials, mainly sheet paneling, used to cover old plaster walls, although the floor plan appears to retain some semblance to the original. Floor surfaces may or may not be historic, and are covered in wall to wall carpet. Modern light fixtures are also present in profusion.

The first floor of the 1900 wood-frame addition has a center hall staircase (**Photo 9**) with turned balusters and a square newel post ornamented with carved detail and a round finial. Fireplaces with decorative surrounds, corner bosses, and fireboxes that are smaller than those in the older brick section exist in a single room on the first floor (**Photo 11**) and one on the second, probably serving as living quarters for the master and his family. Door and window trim are plain, with no moldings on both floors. Sparsely finished living space occupies the third floor (**Photo 8**).

The cellar of the 1900 wood-frame addition contains the former town lock-up (**Photo 10**) in the northeast corner, consisting of two barred jail cells built of brick, each approximately six by eight feet. The lock escutcheon has a patent date of 1878, and encloses both cells, that are adjacent to a small bathroom added in 1924. Bars cover the single window, lighting the lock-up.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Westford Town Farm
Westford (Middlesex), MA

Section number 7 Page 3

Archaeological Description

No ancient Native American sites are located on the Westford Town Farm or in the general area (within one mile). Environmental characteristics of the property represent locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, proximity to wetlands) that are favorable for the presence of Native American sites. The Town Farm is located on a well drained, level to moderately sloping riverine/stream terrace bordering wetlands of Stony Brook. A number of aquatic and upland flora and fauna would have been available to Native Americans for subsistence and settlement activities in this area. Given the above information, the small size of the nominated property (0.9 acres), and the adverse effects of historic land use on the integrity of potential ancient resources, a low to moderate potential exists for the recovery of ancient Native American resources on the Westford Town Farm property.

A high potential exists for locating historic archaeological resources on the Town Farm property. Structural evidence may exist from buildings and occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells) from the John Read Farm, purchased by the town for the Town Farm in 1824. The wood-frame Read Farmhouse, said to date to the early to mid 18th century, was demolished in 1837 and replaced by a new brick structure on the same site. An outhouse, chambers, and an apartment for refractory subjects were reported on the Read Farm at the time of its purchase. Outbuildings associated with the agricultural activities at the farm also likely existed. Structural evidence from several outbuildings and occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells) related to the existing Town Farm building may also survive. Structural evidence from several outbuildings associated with domestic and agricultural operations at the Town Farm may also exist. Some of the outbuildings no longer extant may include a buttery, a shed containing a well room, a wood shed, and an ice house. Structural evidence may exist from two additions to the structure in 1839-40 and 1900. Structural evidence may also exist from barns built in 1893 and 1922, both of which are no longer extant. Archaeological evidence from earlier barns may also survive. The existence of an outhouse/privy well into the 20th century is indicated by the fact that a toilet was not installed in the Town Farm building until 1924. While it has been suggested that residents of the Town Farm were buried at the Westlawn Cemetery in Westford, an unmarked or overgrown burial ground may also exist on the grounds of the Westford Town Farm. Documentary research, combined with archaeological survey and testing, may also determine whether an earlier family burial ground associated with the John Read Farm also exists.

(end)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Westford Town Farm
Westford (Middlesex), MA

Section number 8 Page 1

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Introduction

Westford's Town Farm retains sufficient integrity of setting, location, design, materials (partially), feeling, and association to merit designation in the National Register of Historic Places despite the vinyl siding on a secondary element of the property. The Westford Town Farm was in use until 1959, which is later than most others in the state and is eligible for the National Register under Criteria A and C at the local level as a prime example of the town's social safety net during the 19th and 20th centuries. The end date of 1959 for the period of significance extends beyond the 50-year cut-off due to the much later than average duration of the building's function as a town farm.

American efforts in public health and assistance to the poor were subject to English influence beginning in the Colonial Period. Britain's Queen Elizabeth I established "Poor Laws" in 1601 that provided municipalities and local governments with the power to determine a person's place of residence. This precaution was expressed in America by "warning out" potentially non-productive persons, by accepting responsibility for non-productive but established citizens to oversee treatment of the indigent and mentally ill, and to distinguish between able-bodied, disabled, and incarcerated inmates of almshouses. The poorhouse in Boston, one of the colony's first to be established in 1664, presumably operated under these principles.

Public oversight of the sick and poor increased in larger towns during the period and accelerated statewide after 1821, and following the efforts of Boston Mayor Josiah Quincy to create a system whereby those in need might be housed while simultaneously providing some useful service to themselves and to the community. The poor farms were thought to have the added benefit of reducing the costs to government of caring for the sick under the system involving multiple private homeowners, although this was not necessarily true over the long term. As a result of the combination of the 1821 economic depression and Mayor Quincy's reporting on the subject, the number of poor farms increased in Massachusetts from 83 in 1824 to a high of 223 after the Civil War. This and other information comes from the work of historian Heli Meltsner who has performed extensive research on the subject at the statewide level. While these facilities were often built away from town centers and villages, possibly to prevent temptation of the intemperant, or perhaps to conceal the sickly from view, they represented the best early thinking on how to deal with some social problems. Indeed, the poor farm, almshouse, or town farm as it was variously known, remained in use across the state until the federally sponsored social programs of the early 20th century. Currently, 42 purpose-built town farms and 50 that were adapted for such use survive in Massachusetts, according to Meltsner.

1729-1837

During the Colonial Period, non-productive citizens in smaller, more remote, communities such as Westford, which lacked public housing for the poor and indigent, were cared for at the expense of the town but in the private homes of those who made the lowest bid for the job of taking in, feeding, and clothing those unable to do so themselves, such as orphans, the mentally ill, physically disabled, debilitated or dissipated. Homeless people may or may not have been included in this category, depending upon whether they appeared to be vagrants, tramps, or wanderers. The Westford Overseers of the Poor, appointed in 1816 and reporting their expenses to the town for the first time in January 1817, would have been responsible for decisions about assigning poor people to the homes of different bidders.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Westford Town Farm
Westford (Middlesex), MA

Section number 8 Page 2

The expenses of the Poor Farm operation were recorded annually in the town report by the elected or appointed Overseer of the Poor. With the dissemination in 1821 of reporting on the treatment of the poor by Josiah Quincy, made while he served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, which suggested centralizing the process of relief for the poor in a way that would presage centralization of rural district schools in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, towns began to buy or build farms in order to provide work for, reduce public spending on, and possibly raise the standard of treatment of the poor. Consequently, according to Westford historian Reverend Edwin Hodgman, writing in 1883, voters of Westford approved on April 5, 1824, the purchase for \$2500 of the farm of John Read for use as a poor farm. The amount represents a farm of significant acreage (it comprised 170 acres), and a house of some size and in good condition, compared to valuations of others in the town at the time. While Westford Museum researcher Marilyn Day indicates the house was a rather large building with two stories and six rooms that slept between two and six people each, an outhouse, chambers, and apartment for “refractory subjects” (people who came for meals only), the “Report of the Committee Appointed by the House of Representatives on the Pauper System,” printed in 1833 and quoted by Meltsner, states that “Immoralities have resulted from the impracticability of classifying inmates.” Additional information in the report indicates that the house was nearly 100 years old, that some inmates are capable of a day’s work, some a partial day, and still others totally incapable, and that in 1832, two inmates were committed for intemperance.

Previously appointed members of the committee to oversee the purchase of the Read farm were Eliakim Hutchins, Samuel Richardson, Zaccheus Read, and John Abbot who were also responsible for stocking the farm, for hiring a master and mistress, creating “Bye Laws[sic], or Orders and Regulations of Westford Workhouse” and for overseeing its operations. Selection of the first overseer was for Jonathan Hosmer who was succeeded by Otis Haywood. An original copy of the 1824 “Bye Laws” was recovered recently from the cellar of Town Hall by Westford Town Clerk Kaari Tari, they reveal that the overseers sought temperance, providence, and moral character in the residents; met at the workhouse on the first Saturday of every month, took responsibility, in addition to a justice of the peace, for determining who would be sent to the farm, insisted on schooling for children and that inmates keep the Lord’s Day, prohibited liquor, determined hours of rising, eating and retiring, determined what appears to be a permanent, detailed, and inflexible weekly menu, and would leave punishment, apparel, labor, and maintenance decisions to the master. The Town Farm was the site of the deaths of 28 people between 1828 and 1838. The residents of the Town Farm who died here may have been buried in the Westlawn Cemetery (NRIND) on Concord Road, as the sextons there were reported to have buried paupers. The Town Farm was home to between 19 and 23 people at a time between 1828 and 1838 and was the birthplace of one person. Work done by inmates in 1820 included farming, repairing shoes, drawing of stone (probably in quarries of nearby Graniteville, NRDIS), and unspecified tasks at a forge, probably in nearby Forge Village (NRDIS). It is assumed the inmates were paid for their work and were encouraged to make their way in the world when possible. Stone walls across the road and no longer part of the property may have been built by inmates, given the description of their work in 1820.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Westford Town Farm
Westford (Middlesex), MA

Section number 8 Page 3

1837-1931

Due to its deteriorated condition, the Read farmhouse was replaced on the same site in 1837 with the current brick building, built by Daniel W. Hartwell. The building committee appointed at town meeting recommended a 2-story, 39' x 40' building, with a buttery and well-room in the shed. The total cost of the house and shed was \$3002.45, or \$600.45 over budget. A wood-framed addition was made in 1839-40, according to entries in town reports concerning a second Town Farm building committee. Meltsner, who has examined Town Farms across Massachusetts, suggests the placement of the 1840 ell, as well as the existing 1900 addition that replaced it, were oddly placed against the north facing façade, itself an oddity when considering that the southerly orientation was more common. She suggests the domestic form built at relatively large scale in masonry was a reaction to the increasing industrialization in Westford, where wage-earners had no land or other property of their own to rely on for income during instances of prolonged illness and extreme poverty. A purely agricultural town would have been more likely to build a residential-style town farm of smaller scale.

Produce and sales at the farm in 1850 consisted of 1,057 pounds of butter, plus pork, lard, cows, calves, potatoes, hay, poultry, cranberries, and more.

A detached gable-roofed barn was built north of the house in 1893 according to town reports. A woodshed and icehouse were built, mainly from lumber from the demolished 1840 ell, in 1900, and in conjunction with the current ell according to town reports (these no longer exist). Town reports also indicate the architect for the 1900 ell was H. M. Francis, architect of the J. V. Fletcher Library in Westford Center (NRDIS) as well as numerous important buildings in the city of Fitchburg, Massachusetts, and elsewhere. While construction on these improvements was done by the master of the Town Farm, Samuel H. Balch, it is not known if he was responsible for construction of the jail cells in the cellar that were installed at the same time. Town reports indicate that running water, steam heat, and a fire escape were added around the turn of the 20th century. The fire escape mentioned in the town report may be the existing porch based on physical examination and on a 1903 photo depicting it in place. Silos were built in 1913 and 1928, indicating the presence of cows and dairying operations. Poultry is also mentioned in the 1931 town report. The name of the facility was changed by vote at the 1919 town meeting from Town Farm or Poor Farm to Westford Home. This name change reflected not only a change from a mostly agricultural operation to a health-care facility in a semi-industrial town, but it also coincided with a change from a punitive institution to a nursing-based facility to care for the aging population after the Civil War. The 1893 barn burned as a result of arson in 1920 and was replaced in 1922 at a cost of \$3000 (this no longer survives). A small toilet was installed near the jail cells in the cellar in 1924. This appears to be the sole jail cell in town at the time, suggesting that it was used to hold both Town Farm inmates and other lawbreakers. A glass and chrome Dixie Cup holder that remains may date to this time as well, since the cup holders were produced by the Vortex Dixie Cup Company from 1924 to 1936.

By the late 19th century, increased industrialization led in part to the state's adoption of control over more of the process of caring for the poor, possibly because so many of the factory workers were from distant lands and therefore not the responsibility of the local communities under the old Pauper System. State-run poor farms were built in 1852 in Monson, Bridgewater, and Tewksbury to relieve the pressure on smaller towns. By 1926, there were 126 Town Farms in the state, down from 223 after the Civil War.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Westford Town Farm
Westford (Middlesex), MA

Section number 8 Page 4

Residents

Statistics gathered by Marilyn Day reveal that from 1838 to 1846, there was an average of just over 21 people spending time at the Town Farm each year. An average of approximately 3 people died here each year and there were two births during the period. Numbers of residents decreased between 1846 and 1910 to an average of over seven per year, with just under one death per year. Only a single birth was recorded during this time. Fourteen men served as master of the Town Farm between 1841 and 1883, resulting in an average of three years' tenure per master. This figure rose dramatically in the 20th century to near ten years per master's tenure in the 1930s-1950s.

While most of the information about the lives of those who spent time at the Town Farm has been lost, it is possible to assemble some scattered details by combining lists of names of some occupants and census data from the period. Since state law prohibited printing names of Town Farm residents after 1910, most information is from the previous period. State census records from 1855 and 1865 are readily available and provide a sketch of what might be some typical as well as some unusual people at the Westford Town Farm. The 1855 census, which lists Willis Wilder as a farmer and master of the Town Farm, also indicates he lived here with his wife Laura and two children. F. W. Howe was an 82-year-old occupant of the Town Farm in 1894 and was listed in the 1855 census as a 44-year-old farmer and head of his household. True Bean was a 79-year-old occupant in 1902 and was listed in 1855 as a 33-year-old shoemaker, and in 1865 as a wheelwright living at 14 Depot Street outside Westford Center. A veteran of the Civil War, Mr. Bean also worked as a laborer on the Stony Brook Railroad, a janitor of the town hall, sealer of weights and measures, and librarian. After spending time in the Groton Town Farm in 1900, Mr. Bean died here in 1905. Ellen McCarty was approximately 70 years old while living at the Town Farm in 1903, and was listed in the 1855 census as a 13-year old living in Westford with the Cowcick family but not her parents. Alice Jackson was 59 years old when she lived at the Town Farm in 1905, and was listed in 1855 as a 10-year-old daughter of the English immigrant and head of household Hannah Jackson in one of Westford's mill villages (the census does not state locations but occupations and nationalities of neighbors suggest the mill village location). Hiram Leland was 62 years old in 1910 when he lived at the farm, and was listed as an eight-year-old son of a farmer near Westford Center. Mr. Leland was also admitted twice to the Town Farm in 1909.

The 1865 census lists Tyngsborough native Ward Coburn as the Keeper of the Poor Farm along with his wife Sibyl and nine other people, all of whom were described as paupers, and one of whom was considered to be insane. (The 1913 Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary definitions of the words "insane"- "Exhibiting unsoundness or disordered of mind", "simple"- "Weak in intellect; not wise or sagacious; of but moderate understanding or attainments; hence, foolish; silly", "pauper"- "A poor person; especially, one dependent on private or public charity" and "idiot"- "A human being destitute of the ordinary intellectual powers", appear to coincide largely with our own.) Adults on this list ranged in age from 78 to 33 and were housed with two children of the female 33-year-old occupant, three and four years old. The 1869 list of occupants in the town report includes the brothers Charles F. and Frederick H. Peckins, ages 10 and eight. Patrick O'Toole, an 87 year old illiterate native of Ireland living in the Town Farm in 1894 was listed in 1865 as a head of household of four farming a piece of land near Texas Road in Westford. Edward E. Holt was an 80-year-old resident of the Town Farm in 1894, who had been working as a farmer and head of his household of three when he was 49 in 1855. Joseph D. Wilkinson lived here in 1900 when he was 81, had previously worked as a shoemaker and a laborer in 1865 and was the head of his household of three in a Westford neighborhood that was home to a number of other laborers at the

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Westford Town Farm
Westford (Middlesex), MA

Section number 8 Page 5

corner of Main Street and Providence Road near Westford Center. Mr. Wilkinson died at the age of 84 in 1903 as a result of a fall during an altercation with his roommate at the Town Farm, 70-year-old Varnum Fletcher. According to a contemporary newspaper account, "The two men occupied the same room but separate beds. The cause of the trouble was the lighting of a lamp in the night by Wilkinson, a proceeding not agreeable to Fletcher, who was known as mentally unbalanced and of a somewhat violent temper." Investigation into the incident by authorities determined the death was accidental and the funeral was paid for by the town. The above article was researched by Westford Museum employee Marilyn Day. Sarah J. Ingalls, 43 years old in 1906 when she occupied the Town Farm, had been a 16 year-old in the Westford village of Graniteville in 1865, where she lived in a house with her family headed by her father, a stonecutter, as well as nine other non-family members that included three soldiers.

Other peoples' stories have more details and as a result are the more touching. Westford native Louisa Leland was listed in the 1865 census as an illiterate and divorced (one of a very few so described) mother of three living near Westford Center and acting as the head of her household, although no occupation was given in the census. By 1904, she was 83 years old and living with no family members at the Town Farm. It may be that she had family nearby, since she was admitted here three times between 1903 and 1906, and so might have had some other refuge. Mary Elizabeth Cowdry and her sister Anna, at the ages of four and three, were not only residents of the Town Farm in 1865 along with their mother Elizabeth, a native of Scotland, but were either readmitted or had remained here until 1869, at which time their mother had gone elsewhere. Mary Elizabeth was readmitted in 1900 and remained at least until 1910, when state law prohibited the future printing of names of Town Farm occupants. Her funeral in 1929 was recorded with Town Farm information, suggesting the possibility that she lived here the rest of her life. Patrick O'Toole, mentioned above as an 1894 occupant, had either died or gone elsewhere by 1897, leaving behind his wife Catherine, who was admitted on December 14, 1893 and died here in 1902 at the age of 102. It appears that Mrs. O'Toole came not only with her husband but with another woman named Margaret O'Brien who was also admitted on December 14, 1893, and, after living with Mrs. O'Toole for 10 years, does not appear on lists of occupants after 1902. A man named Thomas Carney lived here until 1907 when he was 97 years old. He was one of the longest-term residents, having been admitted in 1877. It appears that the longest term of residence at the Westford Town Farm according to town reports (records that vary in detail and content over time) was John P. Green. Although he was listed in the 1855 census as a 31 year old hand at a nearby farm, Town Farm records indicate he was admitted in 1839, and was still living here in 1905 when he was listed as a 77-year-old man.

Perhaps the most notable occupant of the Town Farm was Betsy Hildreth, one of the least manageable residents and probably among those with the worst state of mental health. Miss Hildreth lived here from 1840 until her death in 1858 at the age of 62, but in the early 1840s she was visited by Dorothea L. Dix, the social reformer who focused on improving the treatment and living conditions of the mentally ill being held in public institutions, not only in Westford but across the country and in Europe, Canada, and Asia as well. Miss Dix visited the Westford Town Farm and witnessed the methods of restraint used in regard to Miss Betsy Hildreth. To quote her 1843 report to the Massachusetts legislature, she saw that in Westford, the keepers of the Town Farm "had 26 paupers, one idiot, one simple and one insane, an incurable case from Worcester Hospital...I was conducted above stairs into an apartment of decent size, pleasant aspect from abroad and tolerable comfortable...but the inmates, grant I never look upon another such scene! A young woman, whose person was partially covered with portions of a blanket, sat upon the floor; her hair disheveled; her naked arms crossed languidly over

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Westford Town Farm
Westford (Middlesex), MA

Section number 8 Page 6

the breast...About the waist was a chain, the extremity of which was fastened into a wall of the house.” To quote historian Heli Meltsner’s 2004 talk to the Westford Historical Society, “Dix asked her if she wanted clothes and the woman said yes but the attendant retorted that she’d just tear them off. In fact, inmate Betsy Hildreth, held at the time, was insane and I believe you can find an account of the expense for buying calico for Betsy’s dress in one of the many accounts retained in the wonderful Historical Society archives. Chaining her to the wall and letting her go nearly naked must have been the choice of an ignorant but hard pressed matron.”

Miss Dix, starting in Cambridge in 1841, traversed the Commonwealth taking notes on dozens of similar institutions, eventually compiling her report to the legislature that was presented in 1843 by Dr. Samuel Gridley Howe, director of the Perkins School for the Blind. This method of performing field research and then employing a sympathetic political figure to present it to various state legislatures in order to effect change, obtain funding for hospitals, and enact legislation was successful in engendering much of the public health law and infrastructure we have today.

1931-1960

The Westford Town Farm, as the building is still known today, continued to operate in the 20th century, even as other towns ceased their operations and sent the sick and poor to state institutions. In order to reflect the social change from an agricultural society to a more industrialized and specialized one, the town voted to change the name from Westford Home, adopted in 1919, to the Westford Infirmary in 1931. At that time, people still worked for their board if they were capable, painted and papered the interior of the house, constructed a new poultry house, and cut brush and firewood, in addition to maintaining dairy operations despite declining milk profits. The name change again reflected a development in services provided by the town farm. The Westford Home might be characterized as a nursing home, while the Westford Infirmary became more like a hospital with nurses treating cases of illness and administering childbirth assistance to medically indigent residents. During the Great Depression in 1932, more than 80 families were served by the Town Farm and by donations from the Red Cross, according to Marilyn Day’s research in the town reports. Regardless of the deteriorating economic circumstances, or perhaps because of them, the keepers of the Town Farm in the early to mid 20th century tended to remain for longer terms than their 19th century predecessors with Edson G. Boynton serving from 1906-1912, Bert G. Brown from 1930-1937, Leo J. Connell from 1938-1948, and Maurice B. Rooks from 1949 to 1959. The superintendents were men in all cases and had significant assistance from their wives in nearly all cases. One example, Charles S. Ripley, the former master of the Harvard Town Farm, worked at the Westford Town Farm from 1918-1922 with his wife Mary, and while there adopted a son, Edward, who came to the town farm with his mother who gave him up as a way of lessening the burden of her already numerous children.

The 1959 town report indicates: “On April 3, 1959, the last patient at the Westford Infirmary was transferred to the Tewksbury Hospital and the home was officially closed. The remaining cattle were disposed of in September. Until other arrangements are made, Mr. and Mrs. Maurice Rooks will remain at the home as Caretakers.” The town report from 1960 includes the following entry: “The Town Farm was painted this year and is being kept in good condition.”

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Westford Town Farm
Westford (Middlesex), MA

Section number 8 Page 7

1960-2007

The 1922 barn was demolished and burned ca. 1970. Subsequent occupants of the Town Farm house included the Police and the Fire Department. The Police Department may have been assigned this building as a base of operations because of the jail cells in the cellar. The Fire Department continues to occupy a modern facility next door to the north. The Town Farm was occupied by administrative staff of the School Department from the 1960s until 2003. This appears to have been the period when most interior modifications and alterations were carried out, including addition of paneling, carpet, removal of historic trim, and covering the fireplaces. Reductions in acreage of the original 170-acre Town Farm parcel to its present size resulted from divisions in the 1960s for the nearby Norman E. Day School and later for the George Rogers Fire Station.

Archaeological Significance

Since patterns of ancient Native American settlement in Westford are poorly understood, any surviving sites could be significant. Although numerous ancient sites have been identified for the neighboring Concord, Sudbury, and Assabet River drainages, fewer sites have been recorded in the Stony Brook drainage, possibly reflecting underreporting in this area or environmental differences in the drainages. Ancient Native American sites on the Town Farm property may contain information that identifies the range of functional and temporal variability between sites in the Stony Brook drainage and their relationship to Native settlements along the main corridor of the Merrimack River. Information may also be present that clarifies the relationship and regional importance of sites and resources along the Stony Brook drainage to other tributaries of the Merrimack River such as the Concord, Sudbury, and Assabet River drainages. Ancient sites located on the Town Farm and Stony Brook drainage may represent a seasonal /functional aspect of a settlement system that focuses on larger sites along the Merrimack River drainage and other tributaries listed above. Sites in this area can also contain evidence of exchange between more interior portions of the Merrimack River drainage and downstream coastal areas.

Historic archaeological resources described above may contribute important information related to Westford's early settlement, the agricultural history of the town, and the origins, operation, and social accomplishments of the town's poor farm, almshouse, or town farm over two centuries of use. Structural evidence from the farmhouse, barns, and outbuildings associated with the John Read Farm may contribute important evidence related to the early settlement of the town, the architecture of 18th century residential and agricultural buildings, and building patterns on early farmsteads in eastern Massachusetts. Detailed analysis of the contents of occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells) can also contribute information on the topics listed above in addition to social, cultural, and economic information associated with the farm's inhabitants and agricultural production on the farm. Information may also exist related to adaptive patterns of reuse, as the John Read farm buildings and occupational-related features were adapted from private use to an institutionalized poor farm or almshouse.

Additional historical research combined with archaeological survey and testing at the Westford Town Farm may contribute important information that indicated how the town as an institution thought and dealt with many of its social

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Westford Town Farm
Westford (Middlesex), MA

Section number 8 Page 8

problems during the 19th and 20th century. Evidently, the results of this process were satisfactory since the Westford Town Farm was in use until 1959, later than most other town farms in Massachusetts. The late date that the town farm was in use is also given as a reason for its retention of architectural and historical integrity. A similar reason may also exist for the farm's retention of archaeological integrity.

The potential for information related to adaptive patterns of reuse of farm buildings is discussed above. The wood-framed Read farmhouse was replaced by the existing brick structure in 1837. Barns, outbuildings, and possibly occupational-related features were also replaced and added throughout the remainder of the 19th and first half of the 20th century. Identification and careful mapping of these structures may contribute important information that indicates how these building patterns changed from the private Read occupation to institutionalized use. Information may also exist that indicates the influence that changing public philosophies on the oversight of the sick and poor had on building patterns and the treatment of the farm's inhabitants.

Archaeological resources may contribute important information related to the social history of the farm and the daily lives of its inhabitants. Since most of the information about the lives of those who spent time at the Town farm has been lost, any social information derived from archaeological resources can be especially important. Archaeological evidence related to building function, patterns of distribution, and detailed analysis of the contents of occupational-related features may contribute information related to the division of the farm's inhabitants by sex, medical or social status, and occupation. Analysis of occupational-related features may also contribute social, cultural, and economic information for the inhabitants. Inmates were employed in a wide variety of trades and occupations including farming, shoe repair, quarrying, and unspecified tasks at a local forge. It is assumed the inmates were paid for their work at these occupations. Occupational-related features may contain information that indicates the extent these activities were conducted at the farm, and the types of agricultural products and goods that were exported and imported to the farm. The information described above may indicate the extent that the farm was self-sufficient. Similar information may also indicate the influence of a cash economy on inmates, the operation of the farm, and the extent that personal items were brought to the farm.

Lost or obscured burial grounds including unmarked graves may contribute important information related to the general health, pathologies, and social, cultural, and economic characteristics of inmates. While the operation of the Town Farm exemplifies how the town dealt with social problems of the sick and poor while alive, the methods of burial reflects town philosophies of the same people in death. Historical and archaeological information may indicate whether deceased individuals were buried in a burial ground at the Town Farm or were interred in other local cemeteries. Similar information may determine whether graves were marked, and the type of marking that was used. Analysis of the entire mortuary context may contribute social, cultural, and economic information of the deceased or possibly the local town population. Osteological analysis of skeletal remains may contribute important information related to the general stature, health, and pathologies that affected individuals, the Town Farm population, and possibly the Westford community.

(end)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Westford Town Farm
Westford (Middlesex), MA

Section number 9 Page 1

9. BIBLIOGRAPHY

Breton, M. Research on Town Farm conducted as part of Westford Historic District Study Committee, August, 1975

Day, Marilyn. Research in Town Reports concerning the Town Farm. No date.

Day, Marilyn. Westford Days. Boston: New England Historical and Genealogical Society, 1998.

Day Marilyn, Interview with former Westford Fire Chief George Rogers, 12/02;

Day, Quincy. Collection of Historic Photos of Westford buildings, ca. 1900-1910. Maintained by Marilyn Day.

Fletcher, J. V. Library newspaper collection. "ACCIDENTAL. Death of an Old Man at Westford Town Farm. NO MANSLAUGHTER." Untitled newspaper, February, 1903.

Hodgman, Rev. Edward R. History of the Town of Westford, in the County of Middlesex, Massachusetts, 1659-1883. Lowell: 1883.

Lainhart, Anne Compiler. Massachusetts census, 1855, 1865.

McGinnity, Pam. Interview, 5/06.

Meltsner, Heli. Notes from a speech given to the Westford Historical Society, containing information on Town Farms, Poor Houses and Almshouses across Massachusetts as well as information on the life and work of social reformer Dorothea Dix. March 24, 2004.

Meltsner, Heli. Notes from Town Farm By-Laws, dated 1 November 1824, located in Town Hall.

Oliphant, Robert. Research concerning Westford Town Farm employees and livestock. No date.

Town Records. Annual Town Reports, 1840-1950. Research compiled by Marilyn Day and Bob Oliphant.

Westford. Map. Edward Symmes. 1855.

Westford. Map. Atlas of Middlesex County, MA. New York: Beers, 1875.

Westford. Map. Atlas of Middlesex County, MA. Walker, 1889.

(end)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

**Westford Town Farm
Westford (Middlesex), MA**

Section number 10 Page 1

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description:

The former Westford Town Farm comprises all of the land within the boundaries of assessor parcel 24-23. It is bounded by Town Farm Road on the west and the former Stony Brook – Boston and Maine Railroad on the south. The Town Farm parcel encompasses .9 acres.

Boundary Justification:

Boundaries of the Town Farm property were determined by the Westford Historical Commission and by the consultant. Boundaries include all land within the specified assessor's parcel.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

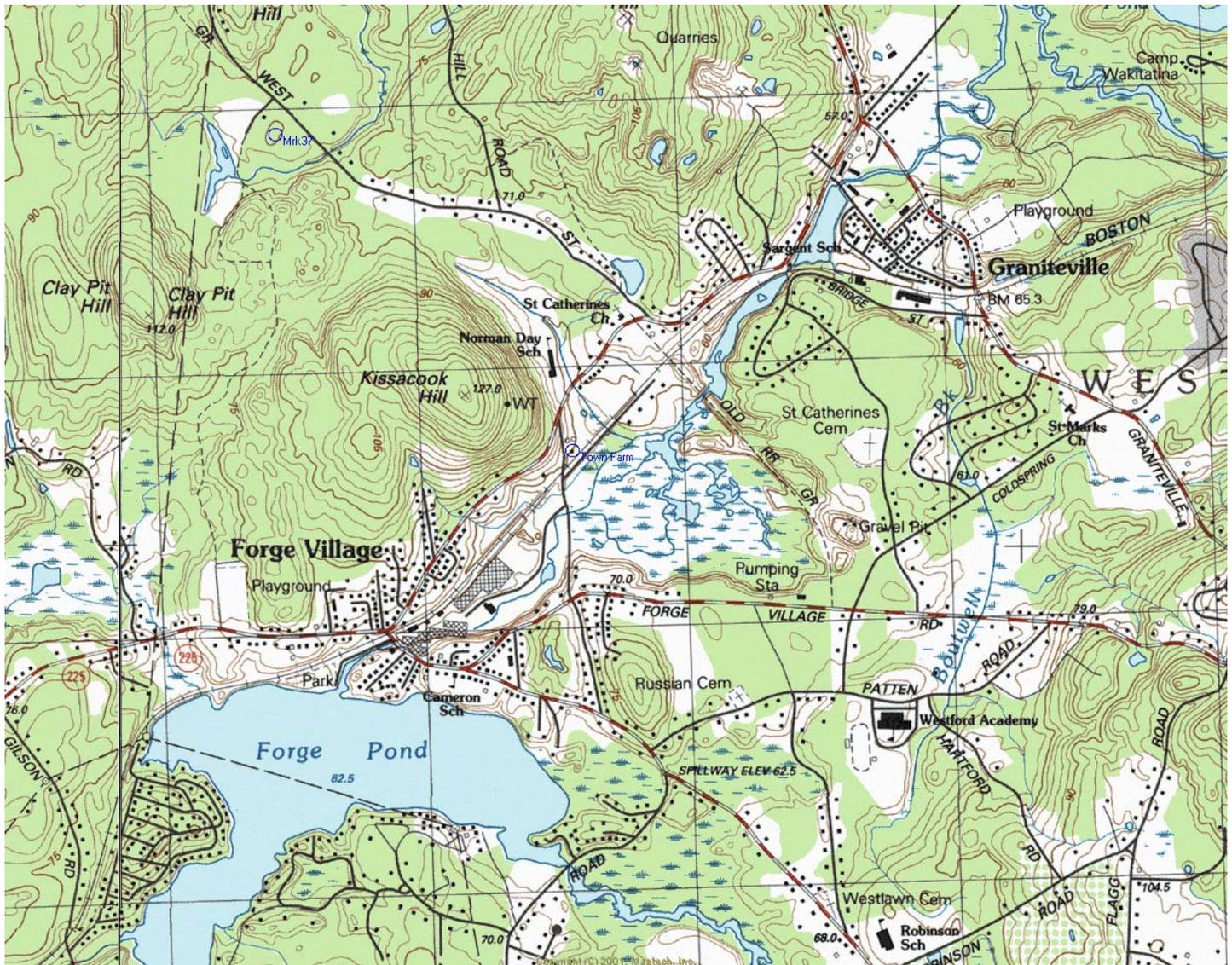
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Westford Town Farm
Westford (Middlesex), MA

Section number 10 Page 2

SKETCH MAP

NORTH TOWARD TOP



(end)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

**Westford Town Farm
Westford (Middlesex), MA**

Section number photos Page 1

PHOTO LOG

- 1 Exterior, View to southeast
- 2 Exterior, View to southeast
- 3 Exterior, View to northeast
- 4 Exterior, View, front entries
- 5 Exterior, View, rear elevation, southwest view
- 6 Exterior, View, rear elevation, west view
- 7 Interior, first floor, brick block, staircase
- 8 Interior, third floor, rear, brick block
- 9 Interior, first floor, staircase, Victorian wood frame block
- 10 Interior, basement, jail cell, northeast corner, Victorian wood frame block
- 11 Interior, first floor, north end
- 12 Exterior, front door detail

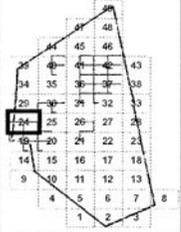
TOWN OF WESTFORD
 PUBLIC RECORDS DEPARTMENT - BOSTON
 Parcel Map No. 24, 2005
 This map is a reproduction of the original map on file in the Town of Westford, Massachusetts. It is not intended to be used as a legal document. The Town of Westford is not responsible for any errors or omissions on this map. The Town of Westford is not responsible for any damages or losses resulting from the use of this map. The Town of Westford is not responsible for any claims or liabilities resulting from the use of this map. The Town of Westford is not responsible for any claims or liabilities resulting from the use of this map.

Westford Town Farm
 Middlesex Co,
 Westford MA
 UTM ZONE : 19
 E: 0296574
 N: 4717668

- town_bnd
 - Easements
 - Former Parcels
 - Parcels
 - Wetlands 1973
 - Wetlands DEP 06
- Planimetrics 2005
 WATER
 RoadEdge

ASSESSORS TAX MAPS

Town of Westford, Massachusetts



TAX MAP
24
 Scale: 1 Inch = 450 Feet



Westford town farm
Middlesex Co. MA.
UTM Zone 19
E 0296580
N 4717660



16 KM. TO MASS. 2A
GROTON 7 KM.

TOWNSEND 22 KM.
GROTON 8 KM.

Westford Town Farm, Westford (Middlesex Co.)



1. Exterior, View to southeast (Photographer: Sanford Johnson, October 2007)



2. Exterior, View to southeast (Photographer: Sanford Johnson, October 2007)

Westford Town Farm, Westford (Middlesex Co.)



3. Exterior, View to northeast (Photographer: Sanford Johnson, October 2007)



4. Exterior, View, front entries (Photographer: Sanford Johnson, October 2007)

Westford Town Farm, Westford (Middlesex Co.)



5. Exterior, View, rear elevation, southwest view
(Photographer: Sanford Johnson, October 2007)



6. Exterior, View, rear elevation, west view
(Photographer: Sanford Johnson, October 2007)

Westford Town Farm, Westford (Middlesex Co.)



7. Interior, first floor, brick block, staircase
(Photographer: Sanford Johnson, October 2007)

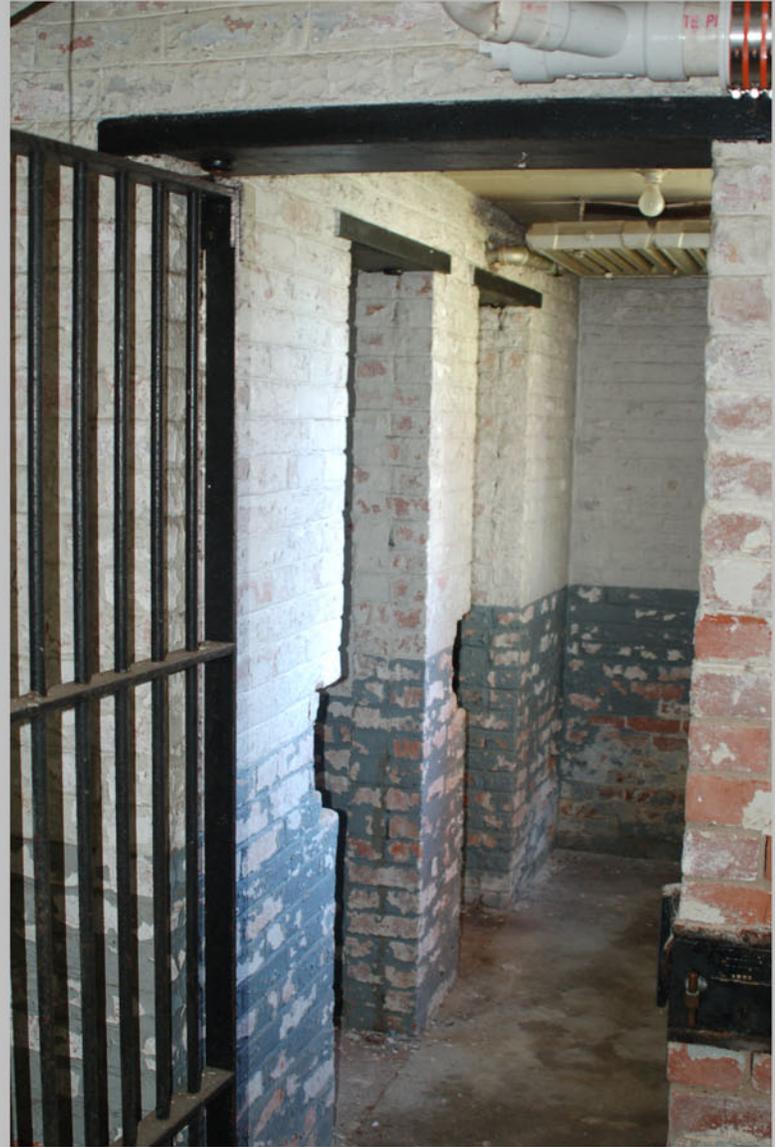


8. Interior, third floor, rear, brick block
(Photographer: Sanford Johnson, October 2007)

Westford Town Farm, Westford (Middlesex Co.)



9. Interior, first floor, staircase,
Victorian wood frame block
(Photographer: Sanford Johnson, October 2007)



10. Interior, basement, jail cell, northeast corner,
Victorian wood frame block
(Photographer: Sanford Johnson, October 2007)

Westford Town Farm, Westford (Middlesex Co.)



11. Interior, first floor, north end (Photographer: Sanford Johnson, October 2007)



12. Exterior, front door detail (Photographer: Sanford Johnson, October 2007)