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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**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 Boxborough Old Town Center

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Hill Road, Middle Road, Picnic Street N/A not for publication

city or town Boxborough N/A vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Middlesex code 017 zip code 01719

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 November 3, 2006
Signature of certifying official/Title Brona Simon, Deputy SHPO, MHC Date

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

Edson H. Beall 12/12/06

Boxborough Old Town Center
Name of Property

Middlesex, MA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

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

Contributing	Non-contributing	
<u>32</u>	<u>18</u>	buildings
<u>10</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>6</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>52</u>	<u>20</u>	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: single dwelling

EDUCATION: school

FUNERARY: cemetery

AGRICULTURE

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

FUNERARY: cemetery

LANDSCAPE: conservation area

AGRICULTURE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL: Georgian

EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal

MID-19TH CENTURY

LATE VICTORIAN

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN

MOVEMENTS

MODERN MOVEMENTS: Ranch Style, Cape Cod

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls WOOD: weatherboard

BRICK

roof ASPHALT shingle

other WOOD

SYNTHETICS: vinyl

Narrative Description

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

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Name of Property

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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

Bibliography

(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)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance

ca. 1730 to 1956

Significant Dates

1783

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

(see continuation sheet)

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Boxborough Old Town Center
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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property approximately 100 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. 19 2 9 2 5 8 0 4 7 0 8 5 0 0
Zone Easting Northing

3. 19 2 9 2 5 8 0 4 7 0 8 1 0 0
Zone Easting Northing

2. 19 2 9 2 7 6 0 4 7 0 8 2 4 0
Zone Easting Northing

4. 19 2 9 2 3 0 0 4 7 0 7 1 2 0
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 Anne Forbes, consultant, with Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director, MHC

organization Massachusetts Historical Commission date October 2006

street & number 220 Morrissey Blvd. telephone 617-727-8470

city or town Boston state Massachusetts 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 various

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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.

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7. DESCRIPTION

The **Boxborough Old Town Center Historic District**, located in Boxborough, Massachusetts, consists of over 50 contributing buildings, structures, objects, and sites. Located northwest of the present geographic center of the town of Boxborough, Middlesex County, the approximately 100-acre district encompasses the surviving resources of the historic institutional, commercial, and residential core of the community, as well as the town's most comprehensive collection of historic agricultural resources.

The nominated area retains the character of a traditional linear center of a small New England agricultural town founded in the late 18th century. Its buildings, which span nearly all of the town's historic periods, are aligned along Hill Road, the main north-south colonial transportation route through Boxborough, and are silhouetted against a backdrop of woods, fields, and to the southwest, a low-lying strip of wetlands. The district occupies the highest point in Boxborough—a 126-meter unnamed hill commonly referred to as simply “the hill.” Although the growth of 20th-century woods now obscures the distant views that once made Hill Road a popular destination for carriage-riders and early 20th-century Sunday drivers, vistas to the distant hills still exist in narrow viewsheds between buildings and trees.

In its residential architecture, the district contains well-preserved examples of late 18th-century wood-frame farmhouses as well as portions of at least two early 18th-century houses embedded in larger early 19th-century buildings. There are two outstanding stylish brick Federal residences; a large rear-chimney, side-gabled house of the 1830s, and a Victorian vernacular sidehall-entry house from the 1850s. No residences were constructed in the district in the late 19th century. Contributing 20th-century infill houses include a gambrel-roofed cottage of about 1920, two bungalows, and a handful of modest ranch houses and Cape Cod cottages from the 1940s and early 1950s.

In addition to buildings, the historic character of the district as a small rural town center that retained its agricultural associations through the 20th century is enhanced by a variety of sites and structures. At the south end of the district is what remains of the original late 18th-century Boxborough town common. The common, existing today partly as a landscaped triangle at the intersection of Middle Road, is located opposite the first town cemetery and the foundation of the first Boxborough meetinghouse, both dating to the late 18th century.

Proceeding north along Hill Road from the meetinghouse site and common, the small village rapidly gives way to the surviving elements of some of Boxborough's most prominent historic farms. While a handful of recent wood-frame houses now stand back from both sides of Hill Road north of the common, several of the

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larger properties maintain the character of the area's long farming tradition in their historic landscapes, including pastures, hay meadows, vegetable plots, and fields. The agricultural resources include two farmers' ponds, numerous stone walls, and a stone-lined cattle pass. Eight well-preserved 19th-century barns and carriagehouses, some attached and some freestanding, also evoke the area's agricultural past.

North of the intersection of Hill Road and Picnic Street, two small 19th-century wood-frame, one-room schoolhouses (the later of which helped educate Boxborough's children until 1949) add to the district's authentic rural character.

The district boundaries follow property lines except for the few instances where an access drive or an open front section of a parcel that is otherwise outside the district fronts on Hill Road. In those cases, the district boundary line crosses the front portion the properties.

Property Descriptions

The historic resources that comprise the Old Town Center district are described generally from south to north, beginning with the cluster around the Town Common and the intersection of Middle Road, then proceeding north up Hill Road. Unless otherwise noted, all contributing buildings are of wood-frame construction with clapboard siding and asphalt-shingle roofs, and stand on fieldstone or granite-block foundations. Eighteen noncontributing, post-1956 buildings are interspersed among the historic resources north of the common area. All are wood-frame buildings that continue the scale, forms, and for the most part the materials of the contributing buildings; most are set well back from the road edge.

Old Town Common (from 1775) (MHC # 914; Map #1; Photo #11)

The Boxborough common originally consisted of three undifferentiated acres where the meetinghouse was built, the North Burying Ground was laid out, and an animal pound was located. Its size and shape changed somewhat over the years as the layouts of Hill and Middle Roads were modified, and as small pieces of it were traded or granted to the owners of the adjoining houses at 429, 438, and 462 Hill Road. Today the parcel referred to as "the common" is a small triangle at the southeast corner of the Hill and Middle Roads intersection, distinguished by the grove of tall fir trees planted there by the owner of 429 Hill Road about 1930.

Judah Wetherbee House, (ca. 1783) 429 Hill Road. (MHC #3; Map #2; Photo #2).

429 Hill Road was the first of the properties to gain land from the town common, when in 1783 Capt. Judah Wetherbee traded a square parcel abutting the burying ground for a 156' x 33' strip at the east edge of the common. His residence, which was built at about that time as a small one-story house, probably forms the

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lower south section of the much-enlarged 2 ½-story, side-gabled house. The building has an off-center ridge chimney aligned with the door (in the third bay from the south end) and six 9/6-pane windows across the façade. The section that includes the three northernmost façade bays appears to have been added in the 19th century, probably in the 1830s. The main entry, which has an 8-panel door and transitional Federal/Greek Revival trim of slim untapered pilasters, 4-pane sidelights over paneled aprons, and a narrow door architrave embellished with Greek Revival trim and cornerblocks, was probably updated at the same time the building was enlarged. A leanto across part of the rear was removed in the 1930s. The house now has a broad two-story northeast rear wing with a roof ridge perpendicular to the main house. A modern wood deck extends off the south end of the house. Two other buildings on the property, a cottage and a three-car garage, date to the late 20th century.

George Peters House, (ca. 1835) 438 Hill Road. (MHC #38; Map #4; Photo #1)

In 1835, nearly two generations after the estimated construction date of the Judah Wetherbee House, the town gave blacksmith George Peters the right to occupy a piece of the town common. It is believed that he built this house on it at that time, and acquired title to the half-acre lot on which it stood sometime later. The building is a late example of a popular house type of the federal era--the 2 ½-story, side-gabled, 5 by 1-bay house with a pair of rear-wall chimneys. The 6/6 sash windows are consistent with the 1830s, but the rear leanto is a 20th-century addition. In the early 20th century, the house acquired the handsome Tuscan-columned attached pergola on the south end and the glassed and columned vestibule that shelters a paneled Victorian door with two long glass lights at the center entry. The simply detailed, side-gabled two-car garage (MHC #39) just south of the house was built in about 1950 on part of the site where the blacksmith shop, horse sheds, and a storehouse were standing until at least 1914. One of those buildings is also reported to have functioned for a time as the town jail.

A small pre-1850 house belonging to the Jacobs, Reed, and Withington families (Map #5), which formerly stood south of 438 Hill Road at the bend of the road, burned down in 1945. Its site is now conservation land, and forms the entrance to the path that leads north behind the cemetery.

Site of first Boxborough Meetinghouse(1775). (Map #6; Photos #1 and 12)

Although the first Boxborough Meetinghouse burned down in 1953, its granite-block foundation remains in place, surrounded on two sides by the **North Burying Ground** (also called the Hill Cemetery.) The meetinghouse and burial ground lot of less than an acre is located on the west part of the three acres designated as meetinghouse site and common land in 1775. In the late 20th century, an herb garden with brick walks was planted within the outline of the meetinghouse foundation capstones, and has been maintained by Boxborough Garden Club volunteers since that time. A wood arbor in a general Colonial Revival style, painted white, provides a focal point at the west end of the garden and foundation. Four

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objects—two markers, a flagpole, and the bronze **meetinghouse bell** -- are aligned in front of the meetinghouse foundation. Three of them, a boulder marking the time capsule buried during the town's bicentennial in 1983, a tall wooden flagpole, and a modern granite marker giving the dates of the meetinghouse and cemetery, date to the late 20th century. The badly damaged bell, however, is a poignant reminder of the church that had formed the heart of the district and the town since before Boxborough was founded. The bell, which now rests on three modern granite posts, was cast for the Boxborough Universalist Society in 1835.

Several early deeds for the land around the common from the 1780s and 1790s refer to the original town pound, which was located on what is now an open, grassed area just northeast of the meetinghouse. It is not known what type of fence enclosed the pound, but the existing fieldstone wall at the east front of the burial ground may have served as its west wall.

North Burying Ground (ca. 1776) (Hill Cemetery) (MHC #801; Photos #1, 12, and 14)

Boxborough's first burial ground is an L-shaped plot, partially surrounded by fieldstone walls. Fixed into the front wall are five iron hitching rings. Resting against the inner side of some sections of wall are gravestones that have become separated from their original sites. The earliest grave markers are slate, arranged in rough west-facing rows in the northeast section, and are adorned with death's heads and cherubs. A small section in the northwest corner of the cemetery that is devoid of stones is reported to be the area where paupers were buried. Markers for the approximately 400 graves here include about 150 slate gravestones. Most are headstones, but many small footstones survive, as well. Later family plots descend northwest and west of the meetinghouse site, some of them terraced down the hillside that slopes down to a broad path running along the west boundary of the cemetery. Many of the 19th-century plots, approximately ten feet square, have granite curbing around them or just on the lower west edge, where the curb acts as a low retaining wall. Several plots are marked by obelisks and pillars. Two large cast-iron, vase-shaped urns are located in the Wetherbee-Hoar family plot in the southwest part of the cemetery. Many of the mid 19th-century gravestones are marble, and several have been severely weathered and effaced over time. Interspersed throughout the cemetery are granite markers in a variety of forms dating to the late 19th and 20th centuries. Along the west edge of the cemetery, five mound tombs dating from 1798 to 1851 are built into the steepest part of the slope, facing west. Most of the front walls of the vaults, some of which are nine feet high, are built of granite block and are fitted with iron or marble doors. On the grassed roofs of two family tombs at the southwest corner of the cemetery, granite obelisks rise to a total height of 14 feet.

A number of known carvers produced markers for this cemetery, most of them from nearby communities. Among them are Benjamin H. Park and E. H. Houghton of Harvard, and D. Nichols of Lowell.

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Cart- and wagon roads 18th to 20th centuries (Map #8)

Along the west boundary of the burial ground, and extending south nearly to the curve of Hill Road and north for several hundred yards toward the Silas Wetherbee Farm, is a former horse path, one of many farm paths and wagon roads that lace the landscape that stretches back from the modern paved roads of Boxborough. This one is about ten feet wide for most of its length and is supported by a rough fieldstone wall along its west edge, where the land drops sharply to the wetlands below. The path, which formerly continued north toward the Silas Wetherbee Farm, was bulldozed in the late 20th century, and is now partially obscured by woods and fill in the vicinity of new houses at 470 and 480 Hill Road. Two other cart paths or wagon roads branch west and southwest across the south part of the Silas Wetherbee Farm. One of them continued west to the border of Harvard, the other led southwest to the former Simeon Wetherbee Farm (MHC #6) at 120 Barteau Lane, which is located west of the south part of the Old Town Center district. The line of a third cart path or wagon road to Harvard is discernible along the main east-west pasture wall on the Silas Wetherbee Farm.

First Parish Parsonage/Rev. Joseph Willard House, (ca. 1796) 462 Hill Road. (MHC #40; Map #9; Photos #3 and 5)

This large center-chimney house, the second residence of Boxborough's first minister, was built for him about 1796 in a comfortable but simply detailed Federal form and style. The one-story rear leanto is probably a later addition. The building has a 5-bay façade. The center entry has been modified: it now has a modern 6-panel door surrounded by tall, unadorned casings rising to a plain entablature of an elliptical frieze under a simple cornice. The windows are 6/6 sash. A long one-story north side ell, which just touches the northwest corner of the house, appears to have been standing in the early 19th century. It has a separate vestibuled entrance, sheltered under a flat-roofed, open porch. The date of the ivy-covered stone retaining wall that forms a grassed terrace in front of the house is unknown.

Although now reduced to 3.4 acres, the property at 462 Hill Road still contributes substantially to the pastoral character of the district. The large, well-preserved late 19th-century New England barn northwest of the house sits at the edge of an open hay field (Photo #13) fronted by a 300-foot long fieldstone wall and a split-rail fence along Hill Road. Aerial photos taken in 1939 show that this field was planted in orchards at that time. The front of the 1886 barn (MHC #41), a grand illustration of the prosperity of Boxborough's agricultural economy in the late 19th century, has a large central interior-rolling door, two 6/6 windows above it, and a pedestrian door to either side. The barn is clapboarded on the front and has board-and-batten siding on the other elevations.

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In a formerly open area divided from the parsonage field by an east-west fieldstone wall, three non-contributing wood-frame houses have been built over the past few years. Two are set back from the edge of the road and are partially screened from view by vegetation. Opposite them on the east side of the road are two more noncontributing houses--a large L-plan house built in 2003 at 481 Hill Road, set well back beside a large hay field, and a neo-Queen Anne/Colonial house at 487 Hill Road, built in 2005. All of these buildings are clad in wood clapboard, and are both sited and proportioned in a manner compatible with the historic architecture around them.

Lt. Amos Pollard House, (ca. 1795) 593 Middle Road (MHC #105; Map #10; Photo #3)

Amos Pollard, builder.

Probably the earliest of the full 2 ½-story, 5 x 2-bay, side-gabled, center-chimney houses abutting the town common, this house faces south at the northeast corner of Hill and Middle Roads. At least one of its early outbuildings stood across from it on the south side of Middle Road. There was a potash shop somewhere on the property before 1805. The town's first store, operated by a succession of the residents of this house, also stood across Middle Road until it was replaced, probably in the 1820s, by a two-story building adjacent to the house with a store on the first floor and a meeting hall at the second story. That second store building was later converted to a barn; it was torn down about 1952.

The center entry of this stylish building has a large Federal frontispiece with a dentil course in the entablature, tall pilasters, and a five-light transom over the 6-panel door. In this rare Boxborough example of an early house where the builder is known, it is likely that Amos Pollard constructed the entry based on a design from one of the popular builders' guides of the day, such as the Boston edition of William Pain's source book for house carpenters, *The Practical Builder*, published in 1792.

According to local records, the two-story Victorian bay window on the west part of the façade replaced two existing windows at each story in the 1850s, and the other windows in the house were enlarged to the present 6-over-6-sash at that time. The building has a two-story ell projecting north from the west part of the rear wall, and two one-story shed-roofed extensions on the west side.

The only outbuilding on the property today is a side-gabled, clapboarded garage built in the 1930s or 1940s.

Dr. Daniel Robbins House, (1804) 533 Hill Road (MHC #42; Map #11; Photo #6)

The second Robbins family house on the property, this Federal residence is one of the largest and most stylish of the houses near the town common. It was built in 1804, replacing a small wood-frame house that predated 1791. The main house is a two-room-deep, 2 ½-story, side-gabled brick block with four tall corner chimneys. Extending from the south end is a two-story clapboarded wing which appears to date to

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sometime in the 19th century. Abutting the end of the wing, its roof ridge aligned with the both the wing and the main house, is a small one-story shed. The roofs of the latter two sections project at the gable ends, and have gable returns. In typical Federal fashion, however, the roof of the main house projects only over the shallow boxed soffit at the front and rear. The main block has a symmetrical five-bay façade. The windows in both the main house and wing are 6/6 sash; the center second-story window in the main house is set into a keystoned, round-headed opening. The center entry, too, occupies a round-arched opening, and above the 6-panel door is a semi-circular divided fanlight. The molded wooden entry surround is set inside the arched opening, and topped with a wooden keystone.

This house bears many stylistic similarities to the house of similar date at 796 Hill Road, suggesting that they may have been constructed by the same builder. The low rubblestone parapet wall spanning the façade apparently remains from a former early 20th-century front porch.

The façade of the south wing has three 6/6 windows at the second story. Its 5-bay first story includes a triple 20th-century window at the south end. The attached shed has six fixed-sash 6-pane windows just under the façade eaves, and a paneled door with small window above it centered in the south end.

According to local reports of the time, the mid-1870s barn (MHC #43) north of the house was built with material from the 1835 Boxborough Town House, which was purchased and removed from its site at the south end of the common by Hiram Felch, the owner of this property from 1866 through 1878. The barn is the English type, with two high vehicle entries in the long west side, each with an interior rolling vertical-board door. The door of the center vehicle entry has a 6-pane window in the center, and is surmounted by a long multi-light transom. A large square cupola/ventilator with pyramidal roof is mounted at the center of the roof ridge.

In the front yard of this property, close to the road, are two remnants of the building's Victorian past—an ornate iron pump set on a stone base over a well, and a square granite hitching post.

Next to the north are two noncontributing houses of the late 20th century, at 560 and 579 Hill Road.

Larson House, (1953-1957) 582 Hill Road (MHC #44; Map #12) Donald Larson, builder
The next house on the west side, the Larson House, is the first of several small post-World War II houses that were built as infill along the stretch of Hill Road north of the common. Nearly unchanged since it was built, the Larson House is an excellent example of an early 1950s expanded Cape Cod cottage. Built by the owners over a four-year period, the building has a foundation of fieldstone gathered from the old Silas

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Wetherbee Farm of which this one-acre property was formerly a part. The general form of the house is a 1½-story, side-gabled, three-bay Cape Cod cottage, but it is made larger by a rear shed dormer, by a side ell on the north end, and by a large front-gabled projection at the north end of the façade. Centered in the front wall of the projection is a typical early 1950s three-part picture window, with a large single-pane center section flanked by narrow 2/2 sash with the muntins running sideways. In contrast to the clapboard siding of the rest of the house, the projection is built of stone, with a flushboarded gable. Vertical flushboard is also the cladding of the large gable of the two-car garage that is attached to the end of the north ell.

The parcel for the Larson House was subdivided from land fronting Hill Road that was originally part of the large Silas Wetherbee Farm, whose farmstead is located 300 yards off the west side of the street at the end of a farm lane informally called Wetherbee Lane. One enters the lane between two more noncontributing wood-frame houses, #s 598 and 612 Hill Road, built in 2000 and 1982, respectively. Both are set well back from the edge of the road.

Silas Wetherbee Farm, (ca. 1770) 604 Hill Road (Map #s 13-16)

At 27 acres, this is the largest property in the Old Town Center district. Although it has lost all but one of its many outbuildings, and much of its former agricultural land has grown up to woods over the last quarter century, it still supports a flock of sheep, numerous horses, and retains many of its historic plantings and landscape resources.

The Silas Wetherbee House (MHC #45; Map #13; Photo #7), built ca. 1770, displays an architectural progression typical of many 18th-century farmhouses in the Boxborough area. Judging by the structural evidence, it began as a center-chimney, one-room-deep house, and some years later acquired a range of rooms across the rear. The first addition was probably a leanto kitchen, which was then raised to a full two stories. The resulting main block is a 5 x 2-bay house with a central façade entry and a center chimney that pierces the roof in front of the ridge line. Later appendages include a one-bay addition to the north, and a longer wing on the south end, abutted by a one-story shed. The building was greatly altered over the years, and is currently being stabilized and restored. Notable early interior features that are still intact include the three-run stairs in the lobby entrance, most of the fireboxes (one with coved plaster above it,) and sections of 18th-century feather-edge paneling in the fireplace walls. 19th-century updated features include well-crafted early Greek Revival trim in the southeast parlor, where the fireplace surround and wainscoting are intact and the windows and doors have molded-board casings and beveled cornerblocks.

The surviving outbuilding on the property is a two-story former shop or equipment barn of about 1900 (MHC #46; Map #14) that stands at the south side of the lane leading to the farmhouse. Its front wall is two bays wide, with a pair of hinged doors and a 6/6 window. The building is shingled and has a corrugated metal roof.

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At least two or three foundations of former buildings exist on the property. The fieldstone foundation and intact cellar of the former cattle barn is a prominent feature of the approach to the house, and the top stones of the foundation of the former chicken and apple barn, now filled in, are still visible just to its north. Future archaeological investigations may reveal the exact site of the original John Wetherbee House of ca. 1702, which burned down in 1770. (Local research indicates that the Silas Wetherbee House was built 500 yards southeast of the old John Wetherbee House.)

Another structure, of a type that was built at several locations on Boxborough's farms, is a fieldstone cow pass under the lane that leads to the farmhouse (MHC #916; Map #15; Photo #16). The remnants of the stone wall-lined cattle lane continue north and east of the cow pass. Two wells are also located on the farmstead, one inside the south shed.

Large horse pastures south and southwest of the farmstead, a large vegetable plot north of the lane, a sheep pen near the barn foundations, and the remnants of pear orchards and English walnut and butternut trees behind and in front of the house together form the largest surviving agricultural landscape in the district. (Photo #14.) Also located on the property are two dug farmers' ponds (Map #16.) One is a small oval pond, which may be as late as 1950 (Photo #15.). Directly beside it, covered by underbrush, is a rectangular pit about 10' x 16', which probably dates to about 1930. Called locally the "Fire Hole," or "Fire Pond" for its service in fighting fires, it is lined with stone, and has a small dam across the east end consisting of a large granite block.

613 Hill Road (ca. 1920) (MHC #47; Map #17; Photo #17)

Directly across from Wetherbee Lane on the east side of Hill Road is the earliest of the 20th-century infill houses in the district. This is a well-preserved gambrel-roofed house of about 1920. While its form is suggestive of the Dutch Colonial Revival of the late 1920s, the house was probably constructed earlier than that. This is a two-story house, with a high, projecting front-gambrel roof that flares out at the bottom edge. The façade is three bays at the first story, with two windows at the second. A hip-roofed porch supported on square posts wraps around from the façade to the front part of the south side, where the porch is enclosed. The windows are 6/6 sash, with some modern replacements. The main entry door appears to be the original. Typical of the years from 1915 to 1920, it has eight glass lights in the upper section, over two long vertical panels.

A two-story northeast wing includes a garage at the ground story. A small clapboarded free-standing garage on the property was built about 1940.

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Allen McLane House, (ca. 1795/1932) 657 Hill Road (MHC #48; Map #18; Photo #18) ca. 1795/1932

Builder: Enoch May

This two-story, side-gabled house, which stands on a rubble foundation facing south with its side to the road, is the product of at least three building phases that took place over a century and a half apart. In about 1795, housewright Enoch May built the first part of the structure as a small, 256-square-foot, one-story house with four windows. The building may have been enlarged by the town during the years that it was the farmhouse of the Boxborough Town Farm (1830-1846), and it is believed that the present northeast ell, formerly part of the old Simeon Wetherbee House at 120 Barteau Lane, was moved to the property by late 19th-century owner Edward Wetherbee. About 1932, owner Andrew Macuen substantially rebuilt, and apparently again enlarged, the house. Among the building's 20th-century features are the three narrow wall dormers over the south façade, the rubble foundation, and the simple, deeply projecting, gabled door hood on square posts. An open porch on Tuscan columns at the east rear was also apparently added by Mr. Macuen.

The building is three by two bays, with 2/2 windows. The south side is symmetrically arranged, with a window to either side of the center entry at the first story. The second-story façade windows consist of a single 2/2-sash in each of the three dormers.

688, 706, 716, 742 Hill Road. (Map #s19 through 22) mid-20th century

North of the McLane House, a cluster of infill houses near the intersection of Picnic Street illustrates the mixture of construction that came to mark many transitional areas between New England town centers and their adjacent agricultural districts. All of these buildings—including five more noncontributing late-20th century houses at 654, 677, 702, 708, and 760 Hill Road—are modest, small-scale dwellings, set well back from the road edge. Four of the infill houses--688, 706, 716, and 742 Hill Road--date to the later years of the period of significance. They contribute to the district's character as illustrations of the type of residential construction that was taking place in Boxborough and other communities as parcels were divided out from the old farms for homes for later generations (some of whom still worked the farms), or for owners who by then commuted to employment elsewhere.

Two contributing houses, 706 and 716 Hill Road, are not visible from the road. 706 Hill Road (MHC #49; Map #20) was built about 1925 as a simple gable-front bungalow. It is sided with wood novelty board, and includes several later additions including a broad, hip-roofed porch. A second house on the same property, numbered 708 Hill Road (MHC #50), and noncontributing to the nomination, is a ca. 1971 Cape Cod cottage assembled partly of pieces from several old buildings, including timbers, boards, bricks, and window frames from 18th-century Boxborough houses, and most of the timber frame of the 1729 Josiah Wetherbee Barn, taken from a site near 214 Hill Road. 716 Hill Road (Map #21) is a somewhat altered ca. 1935 bungalow—a type of house that was built in many rural areas in the 1920s and 1930s.

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688 and 742 Hill Road (Map #s 19 and 22) are well-preserved examples of a variant on the ca. 1950 ranch house. Both are long, narrow, one-story buildings clad in vertical-board siding. Each has a deeply overhanging side-gabled roof. A picture window, one of the hallmarks of the mid 20th-century ranch house, appears at 688 with nine oversized panes, and at 742 (Photo #19) in its three-part form, with a single large pane in the center, flanked by narrow 1/1 sash. Both properties have freestanding gable-roofed garages, which were built about the same time as the houses.

Schoolhouse corner: intersection of Hill Road and Picnic Street (Map #23; Photo #20)

The intersection of Hill Road with Picnic Street, like the Hill and Middle Roads area at the town common, still portrays much of the open, undifferentiated quality it has had for well over a century. This is a true "schoolhouse corner," where the early 1850s School #2 at 339 Picnic Street faces a small grassed area, purchased by the town in about 1807, which is partially enclosed by stone walls at the acute southeast corner of the intersection. In the middle of the intersection is a small, grassed triangle where a public town well is located. The well is fitted with a large iron pipe or collar that protrudes above the top ring of stones, and is now plugged with concrete. Beside it on the triangle is a rough vertical block of split granite, about three feet high, which was probably a signboard in the 19th century. The grassed area south across Picnic Street from the schoolhouse is planted with a diagonal row of maple trees of varying ages and sizes.

District School #2, (ca. 1852) 339 Picnic Street (MHC #109; Map #24; Photos #8 and 20)

Boxborough is fortunate to have five historic one-room schoolhouses still standing. All have been converted to dwellings except this one, which is extremely well preserved as a privately owned, local schoolhouse museum. The building is furnished with old pupils' desks and other furniture and objects collected over a number of years. It is visited regularly by both schoolchildren and adults, and provides a wealth of information about both education and school architecture in rural towns like Boxborough. The design of the building is typical for its era--a simple 3 x 3-bay, gable-front block with the telltale narrow stove chimney rising from the rear end of the roof ridge and a tall flagpole mounted at the front gable peak. The windows are large 6/6 sash with louvered wood shutters—three windows on each side, and one in the center of the façade. The main entry (which may have been one of two) is located at the west end of the facade. At the east end is a small window opening, boarded over on the inside. The façade door is a later 6-panel door; a similar door is located at the rear end of the east elevation. The trim includes a boxed cornice, broad cornerboards, molded hoods over the entry and façade window, and paired Italianate sawcut brackets at the roofline.

Directly behind the building is a rare surviving schoolhouse privy (Photo #8). In use through the middle of the 20th century, its date is somewhat uncertain, having probably been repaired many times. This is a two-section outhouse, with side-by-side boys' and girls' privies, each fitted with a traditional "three-holer"

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privy. The interior walls are lined with horizontal beadboard of a type characteristic of the early 20th century. The building measures about 8' x 5', and has two narrow, recessed-paneled doors on the front—the west door has three panels; the east has four. The wood-shingled roof is side-gabled, with the front slope shorter than the rear.

Across Hill Road from the schoolhouse intersection, a noncontributing ranch house built about 1956 at 460 Hill Road is located on or near the site of the ca. 1784 farmhouse of Edward Brown, which stood on the west side of Hill Road facing the head of Picnic Street. The house burned or fell down sometime before 1856. Just north of the intersection, on the east side of Hill Road, another noncontributing building, a ca. 1965 house set back behind thick lilac hedges at 773 Hill Road, occupies the original site of the 1808 predecessor of the 1850s School #2. (See below.)

School #2/Sally Draper House (1808), 799 Hill Road (MHC #53; Map #26; Photo #9)

That little 1808 school building is located 200 yards to the north, where it sits at the very edge of the road on the spot where it was moved when the ca. 1852 school was built. It was apparently converted to a dwelling as soon as it was purchased and moved onto the site by the Draper family. It is a tiny 3 x 1-bay, one-story side-gabled cottage on a fieldstone foundation. A two-bay ell extending to the north has a shed-roofed, 20th-century porch attached. A rear addition extends east from the ell. Some simple Federal details remain on the main schoolhouse section, including the small windows, which are 6/9s of unusually broad, squat proportions. The main door, in the northernmost bay of the main façade, is a four-panel Victorian type. A slightly off-center stove chimney rises from the roof ridge.

Ephraim Whitcomb III House, (1814) 796 Hill Road. (MHC 51; Map #25; Photo #21)

Directly opposite the earlier relocated schoolhouse is one of the district's most intact farmsteads. The house, like the Dr. Robbins House at 533 Hill Road, is a large, stylish Federal brick building. While this is a square, hip-roofed two-story house, the similarity of some of its decorative elements to the gable-roofed Robbins House suggests that they may have been the work of the same builder. The two-story building is 5 x 4 bays with four tall, massive corner chimneys, and has a wood-frame, clapboarded ell on the north side. The windows are 6/9s, with molded wood surrounds set under flat-arched splayed brick lintels. As at the Robbins House, the main center entry has a round-arched opening. Above the 6-panel door is what may have been a semi-circular fanlight, now filled with a single pane of glass. Also similar to the Robbins House, the second-story window above the entry is set into a roundheaded, keystone opening.

The ell, which has an overhanging molded, boxed cornice and gable returns at the north end, appears to date to the middle part of the 19th century. Its 4-panel Victorian door has unusually long upper panels, similar to those on the door at the former schoolhouse across the street.

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At the rear of the 2.8-acre property is a large New England barn (MHC #52) with a nearly centered interior-hung rolling vehicle door and three 6/6 sash windows—one to either side of the door and one in the gable peak. A vertical-board pedestrian door is located at the south corner of the façade.

Zebediah Wheeler/Boaz Brown/Simon Draper House, (ca. 1730/ca. 1825) 827 Hill Road. (MHC #54; Map #27)

Two farmsteads spanning more than a century form the north terminus of the district. A small farmhouse first belonging to Zebediah Wheeler, and by 1761 to Boaz Brown, is reported to form part of the south ell of the building at 827 Hill Road. The north end of that 1 ½-story section was joined about 1825 to a late Federal "story-and-a-half" cottage. Distinguishing characteristics of this house type, which is common in the vicinity but rare in Boxborough, are the paired rear chimneys and the one-room-deep proportions with high front and rear elevations reflecting the "knee-wall" construction inside. The main façade of this later house is symmetrical, five bays wide, with a center entry sheltered by an enclosed, projecting pedimented "porch." The entry has the full-length sidelights typical of the Greek Revival period. The windows are 6/6 sash. A single gable-roofed dormer is centered on the front roof slope above the entry. A 20th-century hip-roofed, glassed-in porch is located along the south end of the house.

The east end of the combined structure, which has two large vertical-board utilitarian doors at its south end, abuts a gable-front New England barn similar to several others in the district. The center vehicle entry of the barn has a vertical-board, interior-mounted rolling door with a fixed window in the center, and a long multi-light transom above. A 6/6 window is centered under the gable peak, and two pedestrian doors, one just south of the vehicle entry and one in the north corner, are also located on the barn façade.

Reuben Mead Draper House, (ca. 1851) 828 Hill Road (MHC #55; Map #28; Photo #10)

Standing close to the road opposite 827 Hill Road, an 8.5-acre agricultural property marks the north end of the Old Town Center and the beginning of the large agricultural district which stretches north from this point to the Littleton line. The large 2 ½-story sidehall-entry farmhouse, now largely clad in synthetic siding, has an attached 1 ½-story ell on the south side that connects to a small gable-front carriagehouse. Two tall chimneys are located on the south slope of the main house roof; an early 20th-century shed-roofed side porch abuts the north side of the house. Windows are recent 6/6 replacements. Their trim is obscured by the siding, but a slight Greek Revival peak at the window crowns is evident, as it is at the sidelighted, recessed doorway in the north corner of the façade. The roof eaves are unboxed.

A second entry in the ell façade also has the full-length sidelights that illustrate the Greek Revival influence

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of the early 1850s. A sliding vertical-board door is located at the outer end of the ell. The carriagehouse has a transom over the vehicle opening (which is now fitted with a modern overhead garage door) and a 6/6 window in the center of the flush boarded front gable. The south wall of the carriage house is clad in wood shingles and has a line of 6-pane stanchion windows. A clapboarded square cupola with louvered side vents is mounted on the roof ridge.

The core of the farmstead is completed by a two-part barn (MHC #56) south of the house. The older section, which may be decades older than the house, is shingled, and stands with its two-bay, gabled façade facing north toward the house and its side wall parallel to the street, where three large 6/6 sash windows and a narrow vertical-board door are located. Attached to the west side of this barn, its roof ridge perpendicular to the main barn, is a long one-story concrete-block cowshed that was probably added in the 1930s.

A second early or mid-20th-century 1-story barn or chicken house is located some distance behind the farmstead. This building is clad in wide horizontal boards, and has a corrugated metal roof. Extending west and north of the buildings is a working agricultural landscape of 6 to 7 acres, composed mostly of hay fields, with a small apple orchard near the road.

Stretching northwest back from the farmstead is a working agricultural landscape consisting largely of hayfields. Close to the road is a small orchard of apple trees.

Archaeological Description

While no ancient Native American sites are currently located in the Boxborough Old Town Center Historic District, sites may be present. Ten sites are recorded in the general area (within one mile). Environmental characteristics of the district represent locational criteria (slope, soil drainage, proximity to wetlands) that are favorable for the presence of ancient sites. Well-drained, level to moderately sloping terraces, knolls, hilltops, and other landforms are located throughout the district in close proximity to wetlands. Two unnamed streams, tributaries of Beaver Brook and the Merrimack River, drain southerly within 1,000 feet of the eastern and western boundaries of the southern portion of the district. Two dammed farm ponds are also located in the area. Given the information presented above, the size of the district (approximately 100 acres), the availability of open space, and known Native settlement patterns for the Merrimack River drainage and the uplands of north central Massachusetts, a high potential exists for locating ancient Native American sites on the nominated property. Smaller campsites and special purpose type sites may be characteristic of most potential sites in the area.

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A high potential also exists for locating historic archaeological resources in the district. Numerous examples of potential domestic, civic, religious, educational, commercial, and agricultural sites have been identified throughout the district. While many sites contain evidence of foundations visible from the surface, most sites require additional historical research combined with archaeological testing to document their location and integrity. Structural evidence may survive from Boxborough's first meetinghouse (1775) that burned in 1953. Evidence of the meetinghouse's granite block foundation survives, surrounded on two sides by the North Burying Ground (ca. 1776; Hill Cemetery), the first cemetery in the town. Structural evidence of the 18th century town pound may also exist immediately northeast of the meetinghouse. The meetinghouse, burying ground, common, and pound formed the early nucleus of Boxborough's linear center settlement that formed from the meetinghouse. Structural evidence of the first School #2 (1791) may survive at the northeast corner of Hill Road and Picnic Street about one-half mile north of the meetinghouse. The 1791 School #2 burned in 1807 and was replaced by the Second School #2 later that year. Structural evidence may survive from the 1807 School #2; moved to 799 Hill Road in ca. 1852 and converted to a dwelling. The surviving School #2 (1852) at 339 Picnic Street was built on the site of the earlier 1807 school. Structural evidence may survive from an 1860s post office demolished next to the parsonage at 462 Hill Road. Structural evidence of barns, stables, outbuildings, and occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells) may survive with each of the civic, religious, and educational sites discussed above.

During the 18th and 19th centuries, several residences, mostly parts of large farmsteads, were also built along the Hill Road corridor north of Middle Road. Structural evidence of residences, barns, outbuildings and evidence of occupational-related features may survive with many of the farmsteads no longer extant and later domestic dwellings. Archaeological survey and testing may locate structural evidence of the original John Wetherbee House (ca. 1702), which burned in 1770. Local tradition indicates the Silas Wetherbee House (ca. 1770) at 604 Hill Road was built 500 yards southeast of the old John Wetherbee House. By the mid-1790's, three or four houses were reported standing in the Boxborough Old Town Center historic district area. By 1810, eight dwellings, all associated with sizeable farms, were reported in the district area north of the Middle Road intersection. Structural evidence may exist from the farmhouse (1784) of Edward Brown in the vicinity of the existing noncontributing house at 460 Hill Road. The 1784 Brown House burned or fell down sometime before 1856. A small pre-1850 house belonging to the Jacobs, Reed, and Withington families formerly stood south of 438 Hill Road until it burned in 1945.

Structural evidence from barns stables, outbuildings and occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells) may exist with all domestic, civic, religious, educational, commercial, and agricultural buildings that survive exclusively as archaeological sites and with extant buildings in the district. A blacksmith shop, horse sheds, and storehouse, no longer extant, were standing near the Peters House (ca. 1835) at 438 Hill Road until at least 1914.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE

The **Boxborough Old Town Center Historic District** meets Criteria A and C of the National Register at the local level for its historical and architectural significance.

The proposed district is eligible under **Criterion A** for its association with more than 200 years of Boxborough's domestic, civic, religious, educational, economic, and agricultural life. Many of the contributing historic properties were the homes of Boxborough's oldest and most influential families in their respective generations. Members of those families were prominent community leaders, serving as town and state officers, church deacons and schoolteachers, as well as farmers. They included the town's first minister, carpenters, blacksmiths and wheelwrights, an inventor and piano manufacturer, and a series of shopkeepers at what was for decades the most significant store in the Boxborough vicinity.

The district meets **Criterion C** of the National Register as Boxborough's greatest concentration of intact buildings and structures dating from the 18th to the mid 20th centuries. Its collection of houses provides a panorama of well-preserved examples of Colonial, Federal, vernacular Greek Revival and later 19th-century house types and styles as interpreted by builders in a small rural community at the western edge of Middlesex County. Contributing 20th-century infill buildings include modest examples of bungalows and a gambrel-roofed cottage from the 1920s and 1930s, and several ranch houses and Cape Cod cottages from the 1940s and early 1950s, some of which illustrate the work of one of Boxborough's most prolific builders, Thomas A. Steele.

Also contributing to the significance of the district under both Criteria A and C are non-residential buildings, sites, structures, and objects illustrating the full range of the area's development as a small town center and agricultural district. A cluster of resources at the south end of the district remains from the longtime core of Boxborough's civic and religious life--the original late 18th-century town common, the first town burying ground, and the foundation of the first Boxborough meetinghouse. North and west of the common are the surviving elements of some of Boxborough's most prominent historic farms. Several well-preserved 19th-century barns standing along Hill Road evoke the most progressive years of Boxborough's agricultural past, and several of the larger properties still embody the area's long farming tradition through their pastures, meadows, ponds, vegetable plots, and fields. Two small 19th-century wood-frame schoolhouses survive here as well. One has been converted to a dwelling with minimal exterior alteration, the other is preserved as a schoolhouse museum complete with detached privy. Two wells and a pump are positioned prominently at the side of Hill Road; a stone cow pass, a farmer's pond, and a fire pond are still in place on the large agricultural property at 604 Hill Road. The area is traversed by old cartpaths and wagon roads and laced throughout with fieldstone walls.

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Included in the district are 15 noncontributing houses constructed since the 1950s on lots divided out of the former farmland along Hill Road. Their impact is mitigated, however, by the use of materials, massing, and proportions compatible with the historic buildings, and in most cases by their siting well back from the road. The district thus retains integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE OLD TOWN CENTER from European settlement to the Civil War: ca. 1730 to 1865

The small upland town of Boxborough, located 27 miles west of Boston along Interstate Route 495 at the western edge of Middlesex County, originated from parts of the towns of Harvard, Stow, and Littleton. It was incorporated as a district in 1783, but was not made a town until 1835. Beginning in the early 18th century, a few families of hardy European settlers lived on scattered farms in what was still a near-frontier area on the outskirts of the three parent towns. In 1775, however, a group of Stow, Harvard, and Littleton farmers, citing the difficulty of traveling to their respective meetinghouses, established their own religious society and succeeded in forming a new parish. They purchased the 1733 Harvard meetinghouse, dismantled it, and re-erected it on three acres of land in what was then the northwest corner of Stow. The meetinghouse parcel, donated by farmer Silas Wetherbee, was situated near the top of one of the area's highest hills—a place that locally came to be called simply “the hill.” After repeated petitions to the Massachusetts General Court, and after overcoming significant opposition from the town of Littleton, the district of Boxborough, a community of about eleven square miles, was established in 1783.

As was typical of most rural New England towns, in Boxborough the meetinghouse became the nucleus of the community's most concentrated area of development. In Boxborough, that development was largely linear, as farmsteads spread slowly north from the meetinghouse along the existing county road to Littleton, today's Hill Road. A few dwellings were also built just south of the meetinghouse where Hill Road curves sharply west over some wetlands, and at the top of Middle Road, which begins at the meetinghouse site and leads southeast toward Acton. The first generation of houses around the meetinghouse were all farmhouses, with farms of 20 acres and more stretching around and behind them. Many, like the meetinghouse and common, occupied former Wetherbee family land. This type of development, in which agriculture was the major economic activity even in the heart of the town center, stands in contrast to some of the more nucleated centers in earlier communities east of Boxborough. It was a dispersed pattern of settlement, with the farmsteads spread far apart, parcels of agricultural land between them along the road, and views of fields, meadows, and pastures receding into the distance behind the buildings—resulting in a pastoral character that is still in evidence in the Old Town Center district today.

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With the meetinghouse still unfinished, the Boxborough church was finally organized in the spring of 1784, and the next year called its first minister, the Rev. Joseph Willard. The meetinghouse, which measured 47' x 33' at its Harvard location, had a succession of religious and civic uses through the 19th and early 20th centuries, and stood in various states of repair until 1953, when it burned down. Its fieldstone foundation, however, still survives near the south end of the Old Town Center District. The three acres donated by Silas Wetherbee from part of his farm (of which the ca. 1770 farmhouse still stands at 604 Hill Road) also became the site of the town's first cemetery--the **North Burying Ground** (or Hill Cemetery) (MHC #801; Map #7; Photos 4 and 12). The burying ground, which contains burials dating to as early as 1776, embraced the meetinghouse on two sides. Among the documented burials are those of the Chester family, African-American descendants of slaves who resided in Boxborough in the third quarter of the 18th century.

For many years, the rest of the three original acres of town-owned land comprised a small, unlandscaped common in front of the meetinghouse and cemetery, where a variety of activities took place. The common was an important intersection of the roads, a place to corral stray livestock, a training ground for the local military companies, and the site for blacksmiths, wheelwrights, and other artisans to ply their trades. By the mid- 20th century, the land referred to as "the common" had been reduced to the current half-acre trapezoidal parcel at the southeast corner of Hill and Middle Roads. (Photo 11.)

The Rev. Willard apparently lived first at 429 Hill Road, the **Capt. Judah Wetherbee House**, which had been built in about 1783 on Wetherbee land for Capt. Wetherbee, one of Silas Wetherbee's sons, and his new wife Catherine. (MHC #37, Map #2, Photo 2) That property was sold to the minister about 1786. The Rev. Willard's second farm at 462 Hill Road, which he acquired several years later, was a T-shaped parcel of 26 acres to the north and west of the cemetery that had also formerly been part of Silas Wetherbee's farm. That second farm had broad frontage on Hill Road. The house at 462 Hill Road, still called the Parsonage, was built about 1796 (MHC#40, Map #9, Photos 1, 5, 13).

Economic development

By the mid-1790s three or four houses were standing at the Old Town Center. By 1810 the number of dwellings along Hill Road north of the Middle Road intersection had grown to about eight. All of them were associated with sizeable farms, but the occupants of several were also engaged in other occupations in addition to farming. Blacksmithing, potash-making, and probably wheel- and wagon building constituted the earliest known industrial activity at the center. Blacksmithing, having already been a sideline of more than one Hill Road farmer, was carried on at the edge of the common as early as 1806 by Thomas Holt, followed in 1808 by Joel Foster, who bought the house and farm at 429 Hill Road in that year. In 1809, he sold the property to a shoemaker, Abraham Mead. The next owner, Capt. Reuben Houghton, who lived there from 1813 to 1828, is also reported to have been a shoemaker. Joel Foster and Reuben Houghton would have been representative of several farmers in Boxborough who made and sold

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shoes on the “putting-out” system (supplying them to dealers who sold them outside of town) in the years before the Industrial Revolution began. Cider making, another common activity on some farms, is known to have been associated with least one property in the district, the late 18th-century farm of Edward Brown at the intersection of Hill Road and Picnic Street. In 1801, Mr. Brown deeded half the 110-acre farm, with the cider mill and other buildings on it, to his son-in-law, Ephraim Whitcomb, III, who built the house at 796 Hill Road (MHC #51; Map #25; Photo 21) in 1814. Comb making, a cottage industry in many communities in the second quarter of the 19th century, is said to have been carried on at the Silas Wetherbee farm at 604 Hill Road, though it is not clear which owner may have done the manufacturing.

At least one housewright, Lt. Amos Pollard, is known to have constructed his own house at the center (593 Middle Road, ca. 1795; MHC #105; Map #10; Photo 3), and he may have been involved in the building of some of the others, as well. Other non-farming trades in the early years of the district included the work of the town minister and of a succession of schoolteachers, some of whom were boarded in households near the school at the intersection of Hill Road and Picnic Street. The Old Town Center also was home to the village physician. Dr. Daniel Robbins (1758-1837)--also Town Clerk for many years--lived in a small house at 533 Hill Road for some years before he built his large Federal brick house there in 1804, where he lived until his death. (MHC #42; Map #11; Photo 6.) Most early town centers had at least one inn or tavern. The presence of one close to the Boxborough meetinghouse is not certain, but since documents from 1784 refer to Judah Wetherbee as an “innholder,” it may be that his 1783 land exchange with the town was associated with the opening of a tavern in what was then his small house at 429 Hill Road. There was apparently an even earlier inn or tavern a half-mile north on Hill Road. Boaz Brown (1705-1772) is reputed to have operated an inn before 1761 in a building that later became the ell of the larger house built about 1825 at 827 Hill Road (MHC #54; Map #27).

Town centers like Boxborough’s usually had at least one general store. A store existed in the district in the early years of the 19th century, first kept in a building at the edge of the common—probably on the small parcel located just north of 429 Hill Road. The first known proprietor of the store was Jesse Goodnow, who then lived at 593 Middle Road. In 1816, Nathaniel Hapgood, who had come to Boxborough from Marlborough and also lived at 593 Middle Road, was running the store when he was killed in a gun accident, supposedly while standing in his doorway. After his death, both the ownership of the house at 593 Middle Road and the proprietorship of the store continued under a succession of people who relocated to Boxborough from Marlborough. The first of them, beginning shortly after Nathaniel Hapgood died, was Captain Lyman Bigelow (b. 1795) who married Jane Brigham in 1819. Several years later, Capt. Bigelow built a new two-story building on the property of 593 to house both a larger store and a second-story meeting hall. The Bigelow Store had a regional reputation, and as the largest in the area, attracted customers from the surrounding towns as well as Boxborough. The hall, known as Bigelow’s Hall, was used for meetings, dances, and other social events, and quickly became a central gathering place for residents of Boxborough. For many years it was an important adjunct to town

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life around the meetinghouse and common. Capt. Bigelow died in 1842, and his widow, Jane, apparently remained in the house, along with at least one daughter, Augusta, and son-in-law, George B. Talbot, who ran the store for a time. Other proprietors of the store through mid-century were three nearby farmers, Jane Bigelow's brother William Pitt Brigham (who lived at 429 Hill Road in the 1830s and 1840s, as did another, Lyman Mead), and for a brief time, Ephraim B. Cobleigh of 484 Middle Road. The Bigelows' son, Lyman Waldo Bigelow (1828-1886), was also a proprietor before he relocated to Norwood in 1853. The Bigelow Store finally closed in the early 1860s, at least partly due to regional competition from larger stores in other towns.

Small industrial activity continued through the second quarter of the 19th century both on and around the common. The town granted another man from Marlborough, wheelwright and blacksmith George L. Peters, the right to occupy a half-acre piece of the town common in about 1835. The house at 438 Hill Road (MHC #38; Map #4; Photo 1) was built for his residence around the time of his marriage in that year to Lydia Whitcomb, daughter of Ephraim Whitcomb of 827 Hill Road. Deeds refer to a "shop," apparently his blacksmith shop, which stood on the property until at least 1914. An unusual manufacturing shop was run by Reuben Mead Draper (b. 1824) in the middle of the 19th century. He built "piano fortes," perhaps first in one of shops at the edge of the common on or near the property of 429 Hill Road, and later at his own residence at 828 Hill Road, which was built between 1851 and 1855 (MHC #.55; Map #15; Photo 10). An entrepreneur as well as a farmer and manufacturer, he ran a carriage factory in the west part of Boxborough for a time, invented an improved type of water wheel, and with his brother, Simeon, submitted a patent application for a machine that dressed cut or split stone.

Civic development; education; changes in the meetinghouse.

While the Bigelow Store and the various artisans' shops at the Old Town Center served many of the daily needs of the families who lived in the vicinity, the education of the children on "the hill" was guided by a succession of teachers in the center school. A school was operating in each quadrant of the town by the early 1790s, and at least three schoolhouses are reported to have been built by 1800. The one that served most of the children on the hill was School #2, built in 1791 by Silas Wetherbee at the northeast corner of Hill Road and Picnic Street, about a half mile north of the meetinghouse. That schoolhouse burned down in 1807, and was replaced during the next year by the little one-room school that was later converted to a dwelling and moved a short distance north, to 799 Hill Road (MHC #53; Map #26; Photo 9). In about 1852 that 1808 building was in turn superseded on its site by the surviving School #2 at 339 Picnic Street (MHC #109; Map #24; Photo 8).

From 1783, when the state legislature granted district status to Boxborough, until the present Town Hall was built at a more central location in 1901, all of the civic affairs for the town were conducted in the Old Town Center district. For decades, the original meetinghouse served as both the religious and the municipal center of the community, and for a while it had a military function, too, as the

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town's ammunition supply of lead, powder, and flints was stored in the building until at least 1794. Church services were held in the meetinghouse on Sundays, and Town Meetings were conducted in the building every spring and at additional times when the need arose. In the first decades of the 19th century, however, throughout New England there was growing theological disagreement among religious factions, uneasiness over using sanctuaries for both religious and secular purposes, and unrest over the use of local taxes to support the town church. Religious dissent in the Boxborough church came to a head in the 1820s, and in 1829 the original society was divided in two—with the formation of an Evangelical Congregational Society that built its own church two miles away and closer to the geographic center of town, and a Universalist Society, which stayed in the original meetinghouse until the society was dissolved at mid-century. In 1835, the year that Boxborough was incorporated as a town, the municipal function of the meetinghouse ceased with the construction of the community's first Town Hall at the south end of the center common. (No longer extant, its site is just outside the National Register district boundaries.) Samuel Hosmer of Acton was the builder for the 1835 building; the plans were by Capt. Jachariah Sheldon of Fitchburg.

Other reforms were taking place throughout Massachusetts by the second quarter of the 19th century. Like the views that resulted in separating churches from town government, attitudes toward the care of indigent citizens were changing. While poor residents had previously been boarded in private homes where their care had been subsidized by the town, in 1830 Boxborough, like many communities, established a Town Farm, or Poor Farm. The goal was to have the town's poor earn their keep in a self-supporting agricultural operation under the management of a resident farmer and his family. The location chosen for purchase by the town was the small farm at 657 Hill Road formerly owned by Allen McLane and John Nourse (MHC #48; Map #18; Photo 18). Under the watchful eye of the citizens at annual Town Meetings, the Boxborough town farm and household were run for 16 years by farmer Abel Davis and his wife. Mr. Davis died in 1842, whereupon Capt. Andrew Wetherbee and his wife, Mary, ran it for four more years, until it was closed by the town in 1846.

It was during the growing local economy of the second quarter of the 19th century that the population of Boxborough reached the highest level it was to have over its first 160 years as a community. From a level of 412 in 1790, it rose slowly to nearly 430 in 1830. In 1834 Boxborough was considered large enough to be granted its own post office, which was located here at the Old Town Center until Boxborough's office was combined with West Acton's in the late 19th century. The first postmaster was Lyman Bigelow, who operated the office out of his store building, as did some of the later storekeepers there. In the 1860s, after the Bigelow Store closed, under postmaster Oliver Wetherbee the post office moved to a small building (demolished) beside the house at 462 Hill Road, which was then owned by farmer and carpenter Jerome Priest.

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Agricultural development

The small-scale industrial activity at the Old Town Center continued through about 1850. Until well into the 20th century, it was agriculture that sustained and supported most of the occupants of the district, as it did the community as a whole.

Boxborough's development as a town during the first half of the 19th century took place during a period of great transition in agriculture throughout New England. It was a time when the old colonial subsistence- or mixed-farming practices that had provided food for largely local consumption gradually gave way to an agricultural economy more oriented to the regional markets of Boston, Worcester, and Lowell. Improvements in farm technology; better breeds of livestock; new varieties of grains, vegetables and fruit, and upgraded transportation systems all contributed to the growing prosperity of Boxborough's farmers as they turned to selling agricultural products for cash. In 1806, the Union Turnpike was extended west from Concord, passing through Boxborough a short distance south of the center (today's Massachusetts Avenue/MA Route 111), easing the local farmers' access to regional markets. Another major change came in 1845, when the Fitchburg Railroad was built through the north edge of town with a flag stop near the Littleton border. Equally important to the farmers were the loading platforms and other facilities at the railroad station in nearby West Acton. The railroad made possible the rapid transport of farm products to the major regional markets and distribution centers, especially those in Boston, which was twenty-seven miles away—a slow trip by horse and cart, but a rapid one by train.

The general farming of the colonial and early national periods, which on most farms included the growing of hay, grains, apples, and a few vegetables, and the raising of mixed livestock, became increasingly specialized as the century progressed. Growing hops was a specialty on many Boxborough farms in the early 19th century, when the town had the reputation as the largest hop-growing town of its size in New England, but the practice had largely died out by 1860. Toward mid-century most local farmers used their cows' milk to produce butter, and some also made cheese to sell on the Boston market.

Apple orchards also provided a source of farm income up until the Civil War, and apples for eating, rather than for cider, were increasingly shipped on collective wagonloads, and later by rail, to regional markets.

LATER DEVELOPMENT OF THE OLD TOWN CENTER, ca. 1865 through 1956

Boxborough's population remained just above 400 through the middle of the 19th century. After the Civil War, however, it declined, from 403 in 1860 to 316 in 1900, reaching a low of less than 300 by 1920. While other communities in the region continued to develop an industrial economy, Boxborough's development until the Second World War was almost exclusively agricultural. In contrast to more industrialized towns, in the late 19th century most Boxborough residents were native born, although a small number of Irish, and later Canadian, immigrants found work on the town's farms and as servants in its households. Consistent with the decline in population, there was very little residential construction in

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Boxborough between 1870 and 1900, although a number of substantial barns were built, especially on the farmsteads of “the hill,” attesting to the continued prosperity of the Old Town Center farms.

The trend toward specialization in farming continued. Some farmers now became true dairy farmers. Milk production increased due to better feeds and higher-quality cattle breeds, and by the 1880s special railroad cars and equipment could keep milk fresher longer, making it possible for farmers to ship milk directly to market. Barns became larger to accommodate the larger dairy herds, and nearly all were built to the more efficient “New England” design, (with the main vehicle door in the gable end of the building), which usually had three aisles and a cellar underneath. Well-preserved barns from this era still stand on some of the farmsteads at the center where dairy herds were kept. Jerome Priest built his barn at 462 Hill Road in 1886, and new barns were put up at 796 Hill Road by late 19th-century owner Benjamin Hager, and at 827 Hill Road.

At 533 Hill Road, an English barn (with the vehicle doors in the long side) was put up in the mid-1870s by the property’s owner of that time, Hiram Felch. The building may incorporate at least the frame of the 1835 Town Hall. In 1870, the Town had voted to reopen the old meetinghouse as the Town Hall. Four years later, Mr. Felch bought the abandoned 1835 building at auction, and is believed to have dismantled it and re-erected it for this barn.

In addition to the specialization in dairying, the latter part of the 19th century also saw an increase in the number of farmers growing orchard fruits as their main crop. Dairy farming and orcharding proved to be a compatible combination on “the hill,” where cows grazing under the fruit trees kept down the grass and fertilized the trees through their manure. Boxborough’s farmers had always grown apples, but in the last quarter of the 19th century as the regional market for fruit became increasingly lucrative, the town’s orchards were both expanded and diversified. Improved varieties of apples that withstood shipping were developed, and many Boxborough farmers grew Baldwins in particular. Farmers also began to plant large orchards of other fruits, especially peaches and pears, and some established vineyards that produced table grapes for the Boston market. Silas Hoar, who married Lucy Wetherbee in 1852 and owned and operated the old Silas Wetherbee Farm at 604 Hill Road for the rest of the century, produced 3,000 pounds of grapes from his vineyards in 1880, while also maintaining a dairy herd and both apple and peach orchards (MHC#45; Map #13; Photos 7, 14-16).

In addition to all his other farm operations, Silas Hoar was one of many Boxborough farmers who by the end of the 1880s had taken up another specialty—large-scale poultry raising and egg production. Poultry farming was also important to at least one of the handful of remarkable female farmers at the Old Town Center in the late 19th century. In 1843, Louisa Hoar married Jerome Priest of 462 Hill Road, one of the largest farmers on “the hill.” When he died in 1894, she took up farming on her own at the age of

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seventy-two, setting out 300 peach and apple trees; and purchasing four cows, a horse, and 400 chickens. She quickly developed a specialty in white Brahma hens, and for many years marketed the birds and their eggs with all the skill of any of the town's farmers before her. Other women farmers included Jane Bigelow at 593 Middle Road, who outlived her husband, Lyman, by 44 years. She maintained a 30-acre farm there into the 1870s, even during the years that the Bigelow Store was still in operation. And on the farm next north at 533 Hill Road, after her husband's death in 1857, Dr. Daniel Robbins' daughter, Susanna (Robbins) Williston, for years maintained the 42-acre farm there. In 1860, she had a half-dozen cows, two pigs, and crops of corn, oats, hay, one of the larger orchards in town, and one of only two profit-making "home-manufactures" listed for Boxborough's farms in that year. (It is not known what her home-produced products were.)

The development of agriculture in Boxborough was greatly aided by the exchange of ideas among farmers. In 1874, a local Farmers Club was founded. It met weekly during the winter months and less frequently during the growing season, usually at the refurbished Town Hall in the old meetinghouse at the center. The club sponsored a biannual agricultural fair and held yearly oyster suppers. The local Grange chapter, which was organized in 1886 with 28 charter members, grew out of the Farmers Club. It took over the running of an agricultural fair in September, which is still put on today on a yearly basis. Many of the farmers on "the hill" were founders and officers of both organizations. Charles T. Wetherbee of the old Silas Wetherbee Farm, for instance, was Grange Master for the first few years, and also a cornet player in one of the chapter's most popular cultural sidelights, the B.G.I. (Boxborough Grange Instrumental) Quartette.

Some of Boxborough's farmers took on another new role in the 1870s and 1880s, when the rising trend for summer vacations brought an increasing number of city visitors to rural towns, especially those accessible from Boston. With the appearance of regional guidebooks that catered to visitors and vacationers, Hill Road, with its pastoral scenery, picturesque architecture, and high elevation, developed a reputation as a healthful and scenic area and became a desirable vacation destination. Real estate agents were suddenly interested in "the hill," including Hiram Felch, who was both a farmer and a real estate broker, and bought and resold at least two properties in the Old Town Center district. Some farmers took in summer boarders, and at least one farm--the old Dr. Robbins farm, which Mr. Felch acquired after Susanna Williston's death--was purchased by a Boston resident, Dr. James McDonald, for a summer home. Dr. McDonald used it for a few years as a country retreat, employing a farm manager to see to its operations. That manager, who had endured hard times in Pennsylvania during the financial panic of 1873, was Joseph Harry Orendorff. Mr. Orendorff (b. 1845) was able to purchase the property in 1879, and went on to become one of Boxborough's most prominent citizens. He served in many town offices, and in 1883 was honored by being chosen President of Boxborough's centennial celebration, which was

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held on the common that year. He was elected to the town's first Board of Library Trustees in 1890, and for its first four years (until the Orendorff family moved to Concord), the Boxborough Public Library was housed in the front parlor of 533 Hill Road under the able supervision of Mrs. Orendorff.

The Boxborough library, in fact, from its earliest days, was a major feature of the Old Town Center. For a short time in the 1840s, a bookcase of town-owned books was kept at the Bigelow Store at 593 Middle Road. This was actually the book collection for the four district schools, which came about through an 1842 Town Meeting vote that established revolving libraries in each of the school districts. In 1879, a small "social library" of sorts came into being when a Magazine Club was organized by residents of the Old Town Center. A public library was not established in Boxborough until 1890, however, shortly after the state legislature made \$100 worth of books available to every town establishing a free public library. The development of the Boxborough library as a town institution is just one illustration of the local leadership roles played in all eras by the residents of Hill Road. Of the first Boxborough Board of Library Trustees, four of the six lived on or near "the hill"—A. W. Wetherbee, J. Harry Orendorff, Mabel B. Priest (later Mabel [Priest] Robbins), and Mrs. Simon B. (Lucie) Hager. As mentioned above, Lucy Orendorff was the first Boxborough Librarian, presiding from June 1891 to 1894 over the collection in her front parlor. When she moved out of town, she was replaced by Mabel Priest, daughter of Jerome and Louisa Priest. In 1895, the collection of 615 volumes was moved closer to the town common, to another front parlor—at 429 Hill Road, which then belonged to Miss Priest's uncle, Henry L. Priest. In 1906 another resident of the center, Eva I. Withington (who lived opposite #429 in a house that later burned down), briefly filled the position. When she resigned, Mabel Priest (by then Mabel Priest Robbins) resumed the job, and served as Boxborough's town librarian for the next thirty years. Finally, several years after the town's municipal operations moved out of the center to the 1901 Town Hall, the old Boxborough meetinghouse was again renovated, this time for the Boxborough Free Public Library, which moved there in 1908. Two later librarians also lived in the Old Town Common district—Mrs. Edmund (Lucy) Gates of 462 Hill Road, who served from 1940 to 1947, followed by Elizabeth Lymberg, a later resident of 429 Hill Road.

The 1908 reopening of the old meetinghouse as "Library Hall" brought renewed activity to the Old Town Center, and provided a 20th-century gathering place for meetings, parties, dances, and concerts in the same way that Bigelow's Hall and the 1835 Town Hall had done in the 19th century. Social events there fortified a sense of community and helped people weather the hard years that came with wartime and economic crisis. One memorable event during the Great Depression, for instance, was the 1933 golden wedding anniversary of Charles T. and Mercie (Hoar) Wetherbee of 604 Hill Road, when their neighbors on "the hill" presented them with a tin trunk full of \$15.45 in nickels.

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In its last incarnation as Library Hall, the old 18th-century meetinghouse was a beloved part of the Old Town Center for nearly 45 years, until the night of January 9, 1953, when it burned down in a matter of hours due to a chimney fire. During the conflagration, the 1835 bell in the tower crashed to the ground with one last gong. Today, the bronze bell and the 1775 granite foundation are still on site, reminders of the building that was truly the center of Boxborough community life in many ways, in many different eras, for more than 175 years.

Generosity in response to the library fire from people and institutions both in town and outside of Boxborough was swift and overwhelming, and in less than six months, donations of books reached 600 volumes. Thanks to one resident of Hill Road, however, by June the fledgling library collection quickly acquired a new home, which it occupied for the next thirteen years. The location was **School #2** at 339 Picnic Street. Its owner, Wallace Robinson of 828 Hill Road (who had bought the schoolhouse in 1949 when the Town auctioned off all four of its district schools), offered to lease the building to the town for a nominal sum for as long as necessary. Heat was provided for the library staff and patrons from the old wood stove. There was no plumbing in the building, however, and the old privy to the rear, with its “boys” and “girls” doors, was again pressed into service. In 1967, after a new library was built, Wallace Robinson’s son George converted the building into a schoolhouse museum.

With the exception of a small 20th-century general store that was operated at 593 Middle Road (this time in the ell of the house) by Ernest “Pop” Moore from 1936 to 1952, agriculture continued as the main economic activity at the Old Town Center through World War II. Dairy herds were maintained on some of the Hill Road farms, and some farmers grew vegetables for certain market niches, such as the large bean crops that were sent to Boston to be processed for Boston baked beans. A few farmers, including Leon Wetherbee, who succeeded his father at the old Silas Wetherbee Farm (which was now called “Walnut Farm” for the English walnut trees that graced the farmstead), invested even more heavily in poultry.

It was orcharding, however, that made a name for Boxborough in the 20th century. Aerial photographs from the 1930s show orchards covering a large portion of the land on both sides of Hill Road at the old center at that time. Hill Road farmers transported truckloads of many varieties of apples, peaches, pears, and cherries to the railroad station at West Acton, or drove them to Boston and beyond.

Although Boxborough’s farm families were weathering the Depression with hard work and resilience, in 1938 the Great Hurricane struck the hill with devastating force. Many orchards were nearly destroyed by the storm, which also flattened several farm outbuildings. At the Wetherbees’ Walnut Farm, apple and cherry trees were uprooted, a corner was blown off the big barn roof, and all the hen houses were destroyed.

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While orcharding and some dairy farming continued into the 1950s, farming of all types declined throughout Boxborough after World War II. For the residents of the Old Town Center, commuting to jobs outside of Boxborough increased. Small houselots were divided out of the old farms all over town, including a few on "the hill," where small bungalows, ranch houses, and modern Cape Cod cottages were built. Some were occupied by the grown children of the farm families, but others were sold to people who worked at other types of jobs.

When the old meetinghouse burned down, the Old Town Center lost its main civic focus. It also lost its last commercial operation when "Pop" Moore relocated his store to Route 111. But in 1966, thanks to a legacy from Albert J. Sargent, another library building was built on Middle Road just outside the south part of the district. While the last dairy herd on the hill was sold in the late 1970s, today's residents at the Old Town Center still practice some agriculture on a small scale. Horses and sheep graze at the old Silas Wetherbee Farm, sheep are raised at 533 Hill Road, hay is grown at 426 and 828 Hill Road, and many property owners maintain sizeable meadows and vegetable plots. In spite of the loss of the meetinghouse, the common and burial ground at the south end of the district and School #2 at the north remain as reminders of the district's function as a small town center. Most of all, the well-preserved historic residential architecture provides a link with all eras of Boxborough's past.

Archaeological Significance

Since patterns of ancient Native American settlement in Boxborough are poorly understood, any surviving sites could be significant. Although numerous ancient sites have been identified within the Merrimack River drainage and its nearby tributaries, the Concord, Sudbury and Assabet River drainages, fewer sites have been recorded along more inland tributary streams including the Beaver Brook drainage, possibly reflecting underreporting in this area or environmental differences in the drainages. Ancient Native American sites in the vicinity of the Boxborough Old Town Center Historic District may contribute important information that identifies the range of functional and temporal variability between sites in the Beaver Brook drainage and their relationship to Native settlements along the main drainage of the Merrimack River and its major tributaries. Information may also be present that clarifies the relationship and regional importance of sites and resources along the Beaver Brook drainage to larger tributaries of the Merrimack River such as the Concord, Sudbury, and Assabet River drainages. Ancient sites in the vicinity of the Boxborough Old Town Center Historic District and the Beaver Brook drainage may represent a seasonal /functional aspect of a subsistence and 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.

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Historic archaeological resources described above have the potential to contribute important information that documents the evolution of a rural upland community for over 200 years. Historical research combined with archaeological survey and testing can help identify the location, architectural characteristics and activities associated with several buildings and structures associated with Boxborough's domestic, civic, religious, educational, economic, and agricultural life. Structural evidence associated with Boxborough's first meetinghouse (1775), the town pound, burying ground, and common can help reconstruct the nucleus of Boxborough's linear settlement pattern that formed from the meetinghouse site. Archaeological evidence may exist that documents the architectural characteristics of the first meetinghouse and the facilities associated with that structure. A carriage house, stables, outbuildings, and occupational-related features may have been located in the area surrounding the meetinghouse. Similar information may exist at the site of the first School #2 (1791), the second School #2 (1807), and the 1860s post office all originally located on Hill Road beginning about one-half mile north of the meetinghouse. Detailed analysis of the contents of occupational-related features (trash pits, privies, wells) associated with the above structures might contribute social, cultural, and economic information related to students at the schools and by extension, their families and the Boxborough community.

Archaeological resources may also contribute important information related to two centuries of domestic and agricultural evolution on several farmsteads known to exist in the Hill Road corridor in the district. Archaeological survey and testing at the sites of individual farmsteads still present and no longer extant can identify the sites of residences, barns, outbuildings, and occupational related features. Data from the sources outlined above can be used to trace the economic growth of the community and changes to the function and internal configuration of rural upland farmsteads during the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. Archaeological research can also be used to test local tradition that identifies the sites of some of the earlier farmsteads in the district. The site of the original John Wetherbee House (ca. 1702) represents one of the earliest homes and farmsteads in the district identified by local tradition 500 yards northeast of the Silas Wetherbee House (ca. 1770).

Archaeological survey and testing might also help identify unmarked graves at the North Burying Ground (ca. 1776), also known as the Hill Cemetery. Detailed analysis of the overall context and contents of unmarked graves may contribute a wide variety of important information related to both the evolution of the cemetery and the inhabitants of the Boxborough community. Accurate mapping of grave shaft locations associated with known and unmarked graves can help reconstruct burial ground boundaries, burial patterns and changes that occurred over time. Detailed analysis of the contents of graves can also contribute important information related to the social, cultural, and economic characteristics of Boxborough's population, especially during the town's early period of settlement. Osteological study of human remains can contribute information related to the health and pathologies that affected the overall

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Boxborough community and smaller family and socio-economic groups. Analysis of gravestone inscriptions and study of memorial offerings and personal items interred with individuals can also contribute important social, cultural, and economic information characteristic of the Boxborough community or sub-groups within that community.

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8. ARCHITECTS/BUILDERS

Donald Larsen
Enoch May
Amos Pollard
Thomas Steele

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U.S. Direct Tax Census, 1798.

Massachusetts documents

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(continued)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Boxborough Old Town Center
Boxborough (Middlesex), MA**

Section number 9

Page 2

Massachusetts Historical Commission. Reconnaissance Survey Report for the Town of Boxborough, 1980.

Local documents

Annual Reports of the Town of Boxborough: various years.

Boxborough Historical Society. Homes and Home Sites Study, 1960s-1970s. (file at Sargent Public Library).

Boxborough Town Records, 1783-1960.

Vital Records of Boxborough, Harvard, Littleton, Marlborough, and Stow.

Maps, plans, and atlases

Beers, F.W. *Atlas of Middlesex County*. New York: 1875.

Walker, George. *Atlas of Middlesex County*. Boston: 1889.

Walling, Henry. *Map of the Town of Boxborough*. Boston: 1856.

(end)

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

**Boxborough Old Town Center
Boxborough (Middlesex), MA**

Section number 10

Page 1

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA, continued

UTM References

5. 19	292180	4707140	8. 19	292080	4707960
6. 19	292180	4707540	9. 19	292300	4707920
7. 19	291900	4707820	10. 19	292400	4708160

Verbal Boundary Description

The Old Town Center National Register Historic District extends roughly south to north along the corridor of Hill Road as shown on Boxborough Tax Maps 11, 12, and 13. The southernmost properties are Parcel 3-3-210 (no street address) on the west side of the road, and Parcel 3-3-121 (429 Hill Road) on the east side. From there, the district progresses north on both sides of the road to Parcel 3-3-192 (828 Hill Road) on the west side, and Parcel 3-5-154 (827 Hill Road) on the east.

All parcels have frontage on Hill Road except for three: Parcel 3-3-121 (429 Hill Road, which has frontage on the Town Common); 3-3-213-0.A (a 10-acre parcel of town-owned land aligned behind and just west of the ten southernmost properties on the west side of Hill Road); and Parcel 3-5-151 (339 Picnic Street, which is located at the Picnic Street-Hill Road intersection.)

In three places, the district boundary crosses the access drives of recently developed properties whose main acreages are located well back from the street. In these cases, the boundary line continues straight across the drive as a line of convenience to the side or rear-corner boundary of the next district property.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Boxborough Old Town Center Historic District encompass the linear corridor of the community's original town center along Hill Road, where the meetinghouse, first cemetery, pound, and town common were located, surrounded by with the residences and farmsteads of a significant number of the town's most prominent citizens of the 18th, 19th, and early 20th centuries. While the meetinghouse and pound are gone, the cemetery and nearly all of the historic residences remain, along with most of the elements of their farmsteads and a significant amount of the associated historic agricultural landscape.

Where feasible, the district boundaries have been drawn to include entire properties. In the few instances where following property lines would include a non-contributing building set back at a distance from Hill Road, the district boundary instead crosses the front portion of those parcels.

(end)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Boxborough Old Town Center
Boxborough (Middlesex), MA

Section number photo

Page 1

PHOTOGRAPHS

All photographs by Anne Forbes, 2004.

5 x 7" photographs

1. View north to 438 Hill Road, meetinghouse site, North Burying Ground, and 462 Hill Road
2. 429 Hill Road, Judah Wetherbee House, ca. 1783 with later additions
3. View north, with 462 Hill Road and 593 Middle Road (ca. 1796 and ca. 1795)
4. North Burying Ground, ca. 1776: line of burial vaults, looking south
5. 462 Hill Road, Parsonage/Rev. Joseph Willard House, ca. 1796, with barn, 1886
6. 533 Hill Road, Dr. Daniel Robbins House, 1804, with 1870s barn
7. 604 Hill Road, Silas Wetherbee House, ca. 1770
8. School #2, 339 Picnic Street, ca. 1852: view southeast
9. 799 Hill Road: District #2 School/Sally Draper House, 1808
10. 828 Hill Road, Reuben Mead Draper House, ca. 1851: looking south

Supplementary photographs, 4 x 6"

11. Old Town Common, ca. 1783: looking southeast
12. North Burying Ground, ca. 1776: view east to meetinghouse site
13. View south on Hill Road over parsonage field to 462 Hill Road
14. 604 Hill Road, Silas Wetherbee Farm: view southeast over pastures
15. 604 Hill Road, Silas Wetherbee Farm: pond, ca. 1950s: looking southeast
16. 604 Hill Road, Silas Wetherbee Farm: cow pass under farm lane, looking north
17. 613 Hill Road, ca. 1920
18. 657 Hill Road, Allen McLane House, ca. 1795/1932
19. 742 Hill Road: William LaFleur House, 1950
20. Intersection of Hill Road and Picnic Street, looking east, with School #2, signboard, and town well
21. 796 Hill Road, Ephraim Whitcomb House, 1814: view north

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Boxborough Old Town Center
Boxborough (Middlesex), MA

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Historic photo (photocopy)

Universalist Church (First Boxborough Meetinghouse) and "Old Parsonage" (462 Hill Rd.) From Hager,
Boxborough: a New England Town and its People. Philadelphia: J.W. Lewis & Co., 1891.

Aerial view of Boxborough: Hill and Middle Roads. 1939. (Boxborough Historical Society).

(end)

BOXBOROUGH OLD TOWN CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT
Boxborough (Middlesex County)
Massachusetts

page 1 of 6

DISTRICT DATA SHEET

C = contributing; NC = non-contributing
 B = building; O = object; Si = site;
 St = structure

MAP#	MHC#	ASSESSORS NUMBER	ADDRESS	HISTORIC NAME	DATE	DESCRIPTION	STATUS	TYPE
<u>HILL ROAD</u>								
5		03-3-210		site of Withington House	mid-19 th C.	conservation land	C	Si
2	BXB.37	03-3-121	429 Hill Road	Judah Wetherbee House	ca. 1783	Federal	C	B
				barn	late 20 th C.		NC	B
				garage	late 20 th C.		NC	B
1	BXB.914	03-3-122	Hill Road at Middle Rd.	Old Town Common	ca. 1783		C	Si
3		07-3-123		site of blacksmith shop and/or store	ca. 1800	open lot	C	Si
4	BXB.38	03-3-209	438 Hill Road	George Peters House	ca. 1835	Federal	C	B
	BXB.39			garage	ca. 1950	utilitarian	C	B
				granite sign post	unknown		NC	O
7	BXB.801	03-3-208	Hill Road	North Burying Ground/Hill Cemetery	ca. 1776	burial ground	C	Si
				line of tombs			C	St
				meetinghouse bell			C	O
6				meetinghouse foundation			C	St
9	BXB.40	03-3-207	462 Hill Road	Parsonage/Joseph Willard House	ca. 1796	Federal	C	B
	BXB.41			barn	1886	utilitarian	C	B
				parsonage field	ca. 1796	agricultural landscape	C	Si

BOXBOROUGH OLD TOWN CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT
Boxborough (Middlesex County)
Massachusetts

page 2 of 6

DISTRICT DATA SHEET

HILL ROAD, continued

		03-3-202-9	470 Hill Road	modern house	2003	no style	NC	B
		03-3-202-10	480 Hill Road	modern house	2003	no style	NC	B
	BXB.126	03-5-102.1	481 Hill Road	modern house	2003	no style	NC	B
		07-5-117-2	483 Hill Road	open				
		07-5-117-2.1	487 Hill Road	modern house	2005	no style	NC	B
		03-3-202-11	520 Hill Road	modern house	2005	no style	NC	B
11	BXB.42	03-5-103	533 Hill Road	Dr. Daniel Robbins House	1804	Federal	C	B
	BXB.43			barn	mid-1870s	utilitarian	C	B
				shed	ca. 1930s	utilitarian	C	B
				well and pump	ca. 1900		C	O
				hitching post	19 th C.		C	O
				swimming pool	2004-2005		NC	St
	BXB.129	03-3-201	560 Hill Road	modern house	1990s	no style	NC	B
		03-5-104	579 Hill Road	modern house	1972	no style	NC	B
12	BXB.44	03-3-200	582 Hill Road	Larson House	ca. 1953	Cape Cod	C	B
		03-3-199	598 Hill Road	modern house	2000	no style	NC	B
13	BXB.45	03-3-163	604 Hill Road	Silas Wetherbee House	ca. 1770	Colonial	C	B
14	BXB.46			shop/carriagehouse	ca. 1900	utilitarian	C	B
				fieldstone barn foundation	19 th C.		C	Si

BOXBOROUGH OLD TOWN CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT
Boxborough (Middlesex County)
Massachusetts

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DISTRICT DATA SHEET

HILL ROAD, continued

			604 Hill Road, cont.	barn/henhouse foundation	ca. 1900		C	Si
15	BXB.916			cow pass ("sheep tunnel")	ca. 1900		C	St
				farm landscape			C	Si
16				"Fire Hole"	ca. 1930	pond	C	Si
16				farm pond	early-mid 20 th C.	pond	C	Si
		03-3-163.2	612 Hill Road	modern house	ca. 1982	no style	NC	B
17	BXB.47	03-5-105	613 Hill Road	house	ca. 1920	gambrel cottage	C	B
				garage	ca. 1940	utilitarian	C	B
		03-3-163.4	654 Hill Road	modern house	ca. 1983	no style	NC	B
18	BXB.48	03-5-106	657 Hill Road	Allen McLane House	ca. 1795/1932	Federal	C	B
				garage	mid-20 th C.		NC	B
		03-5-107.1	677 Hill Road	modern house	ca. 1990	no style	NC	B
19		03-3-198	688 Hill Road	house	ca. 1950	ranch house	C	B
				garage	ca. 1950	utilitarian	C	B
		03-3-197	702 Hill Road	modern house	ca. 1964	no style	NC	B
20	BXB.49	03-3-196	706 Hill Road	house	ca. 1925	no style	C	B
	BXB.50	03-3-196	708 Hill Road	reconstructed house	1970s	no style	NC	B
				shed	1920s	utilitarian	C	B

BOXBOROUGH OLD TOWN CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT
Boxborough (Middlesex County)
Massachusetts

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DISTRICT DATA SHEET

HILL ROAD, continued

21		03-3-195	716 Hill Road	house	ca. 1935	bungalow	C	B
22	BXB.130	03-3-194	742 Hill Road	LaFleur House	1950	ranch house	C	B
				garage	ca. 1950	utilitarian	C	B
23			Hill Rd. at Picnic St.	town well	19 th C.		C	St
23				signboard	19 th C.		C	O
	BXB.131	03-3-165.1	760 Hill Road	modern house	ca. 1956	ranch house	NC	B
	BXB.132	03-5-152	773 Hill Road	modern house	ca. 1965	no style	NC	B
25	BXB.51	03-3-193	796 Hill Road	Ephraim Whitcomb, III House	1814	Federal	C	B
	BXB.52			barn	mid-19 th C.	utilitarian	C	B
26	BXB.53	03-5-153	799 Hill Road	District #2 School/Sally Draper Hse.	1808	no style	C	B
27	BXB.54	03-5-154	827 Hill Road	Zebediah Wheeler/Boaz Brown/ Simon Draper House	ca. 1730/ca. 1825	Federal	C	B
28	BXB.55	03-3-192	828 Hill Road	Reuben Mead Draper House	ca. 1851	Greek Revival	C	B
	BXB.56			barn	18 th -19 th C.	utilitarian	C	B
				barn	late 19 th C.	utilitarian	C	B
				hay fields and orchard	19 th -20 th C.	agricultural landscape	C	Si

BOXBOROUGH OLD TOWN CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT
Boxborough (Middlesex County)
Massachusetts

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DISTRICT DATA SHEET

MIDDLE ROAD

10	BXB.105	03-5-101	593 Middle Road	Lt. Amos Pollard House	ca. 1795	Federal	C	B
				garage	ca. 1930s	utilitarian	C	B

PICNIC STREET

24	BXB.109	03-5-151	339 Picnic Street	School #2	ca. 1852	Italianate vernacular	C	B
				privy	ca. 1900	utilitarian	C	B

THROUGHOUT THE DISTRICT:

8			Town Center road network, including Hill and Middle Rd.s and assorted agricultural wagon roads and cart paths		18 th through early 20 th C.		C	St
			System of fieldstone walls		18 th and 19 th C.		C	St

BOXBOROUGH OLD TOWN CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT
Boxborough (Middlesex County)
Massachusetts

DISTRICT DATA SHEET

TOTAL DISTRICT RESOURCE COUNT:

	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Non-contributing</u>
BUILDINGS:	32	18
STRUCTURES:	6	1
OBJECTS:	4	1
SITES:	<u>10</u>	0
TOTAL CONTRIBUTING:	52	TOTAL NONCONTRIBUTING: 20

BOXBOROUGH OLD TOWN CENTER NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT

May, 2006

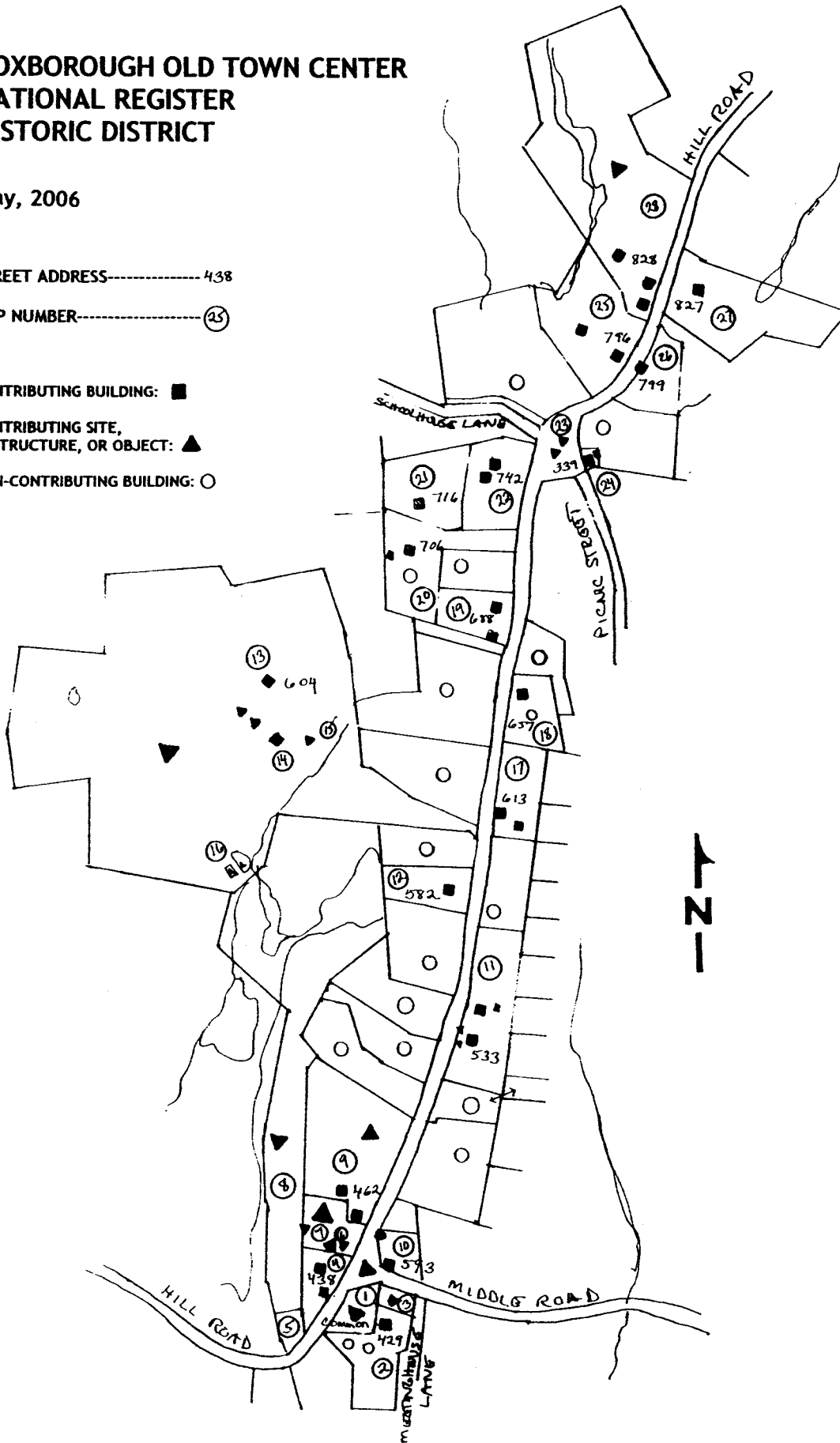
STREET ADDRESS-----438

MAP NUMBER-----25

CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: ■

CONTRIBUTING SITE,
STRUCTURE, OR OBJECT: ▲

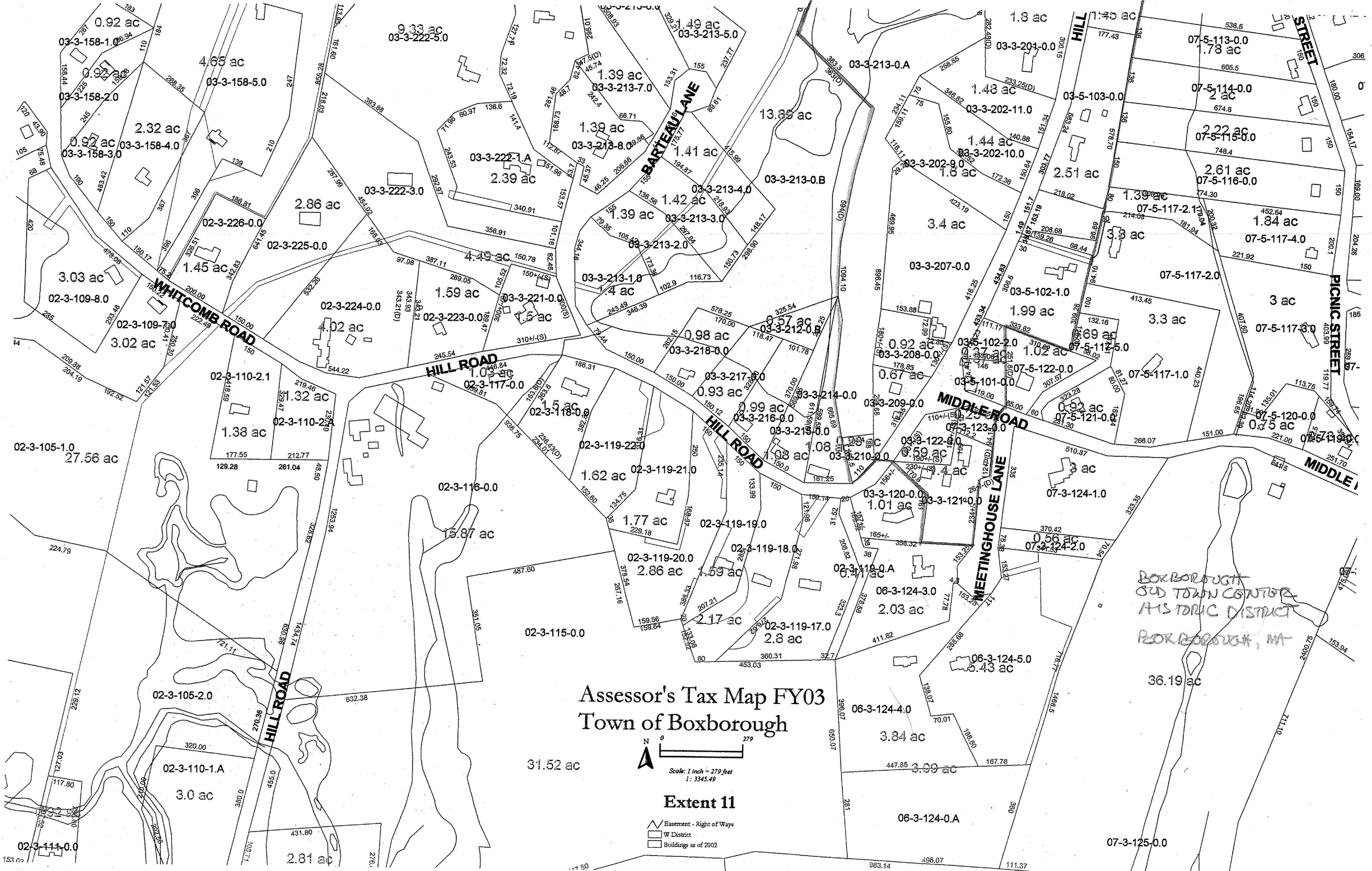
NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDING: ○



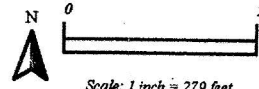


The abundance of apple trees in Boxborough is evident in this 1939 aerial photograph. The Middle Road orchards of Burpee F. Steele are shown in the lower right; further up the road is the Town Common and Library Hall. (Photo courtesy of Boxborough Historical Society; gift of E. A. Moore.)

Aerial view of Boxborough: Hill and Middle Roads, 1939



Assessor's Tax Map FY03
Town of Boxborough



Extent 11

- Easement - Right of Ways
- W District
- Buildings as of 2002

BOXBOROUGH
OLD TOWN CENTER
HISTORIC DISTRICT
BOXBOROUGH, MA

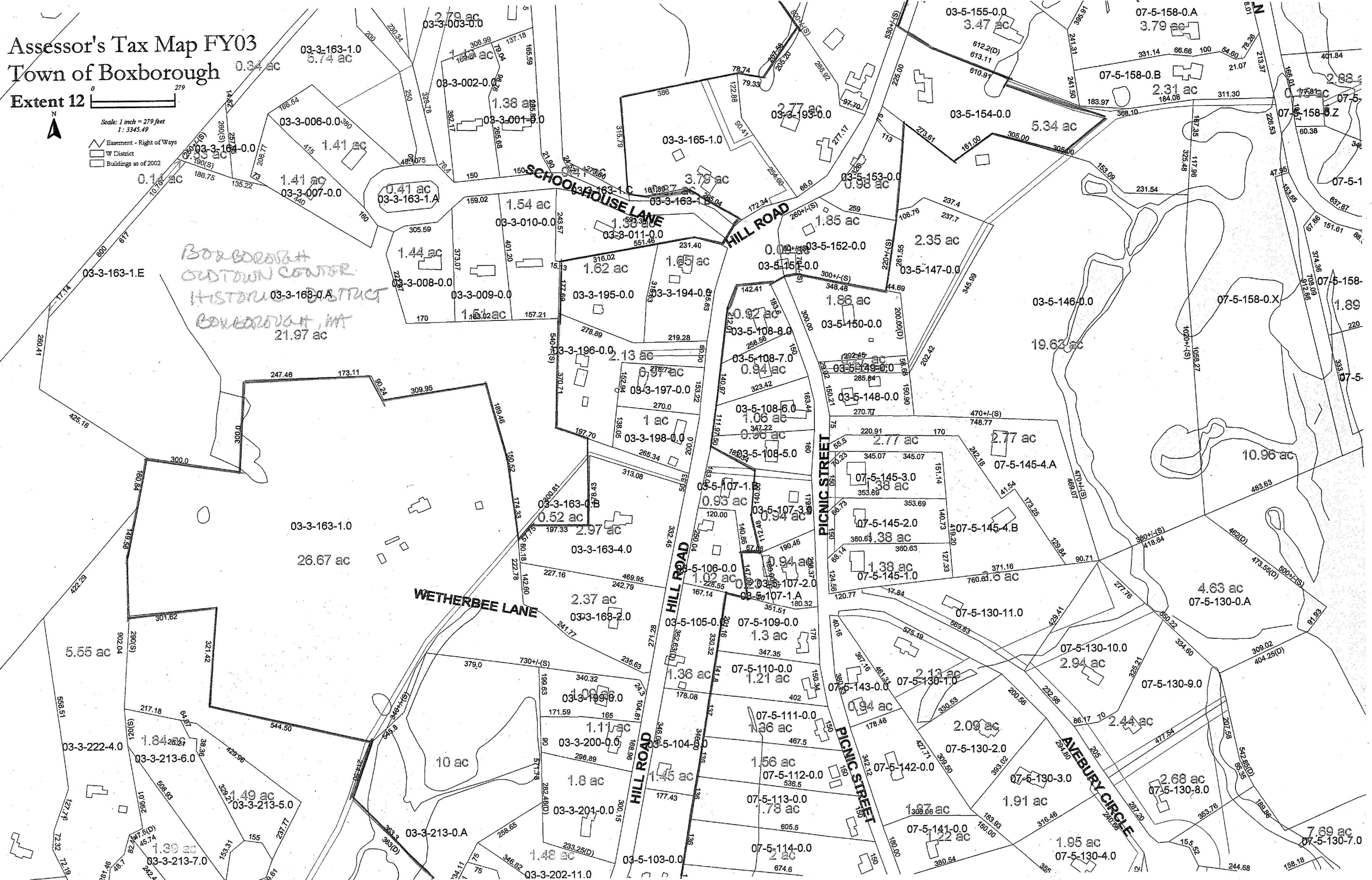
Assessor's Tax Map FY03 Town of Boxborough

Extent 12

Scale: 1 inch = 279 feet
1: 3345.49

- ▬ Easement - Right of Ways
- ▭ W District
- ▭ Buildings as of 2002

*Boxborough
Oldtown Center
Historic District
Boxborough, MA*



Assessor's Tax Map FY03 Town of Boxborough

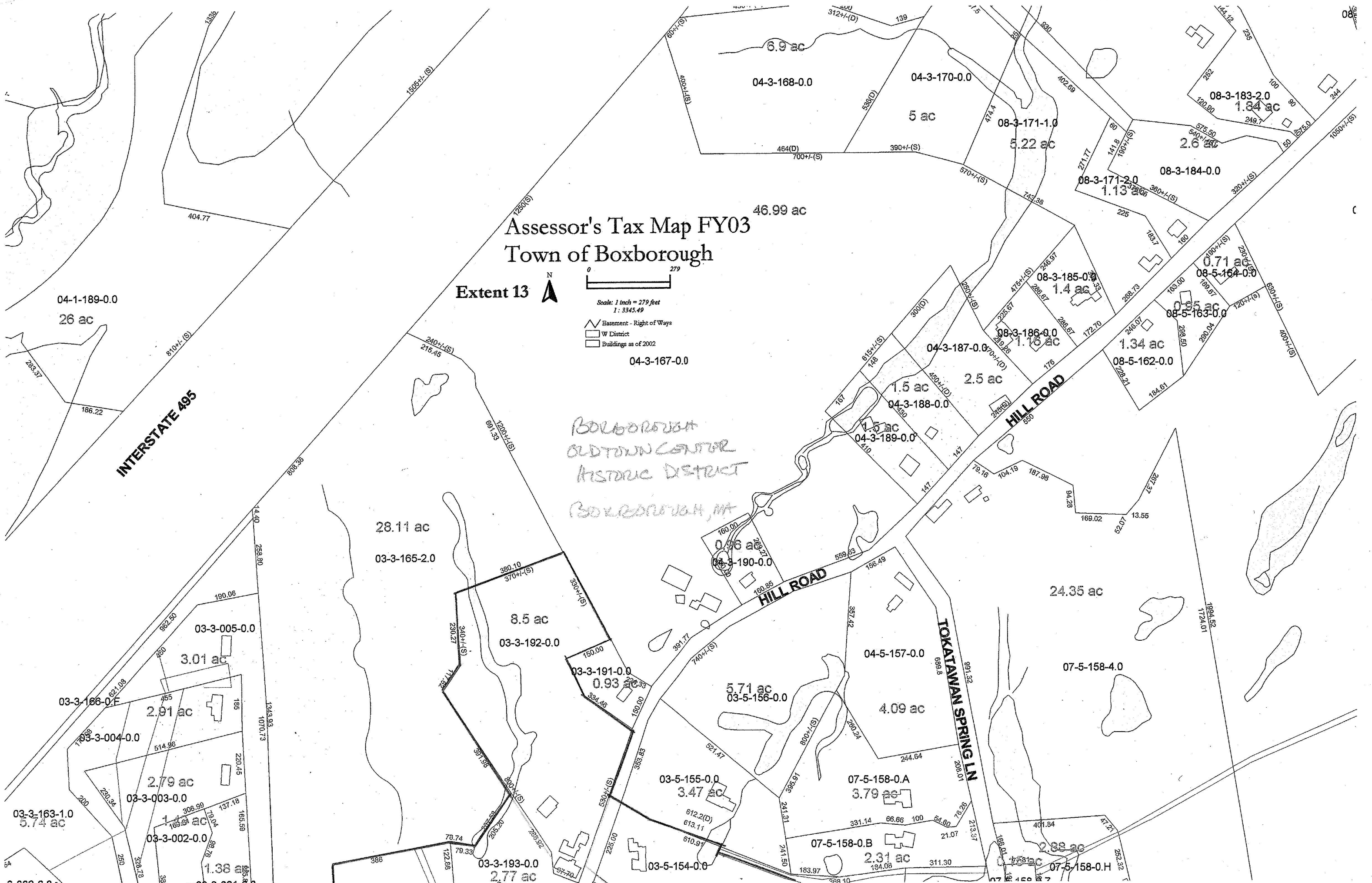
Extent 13

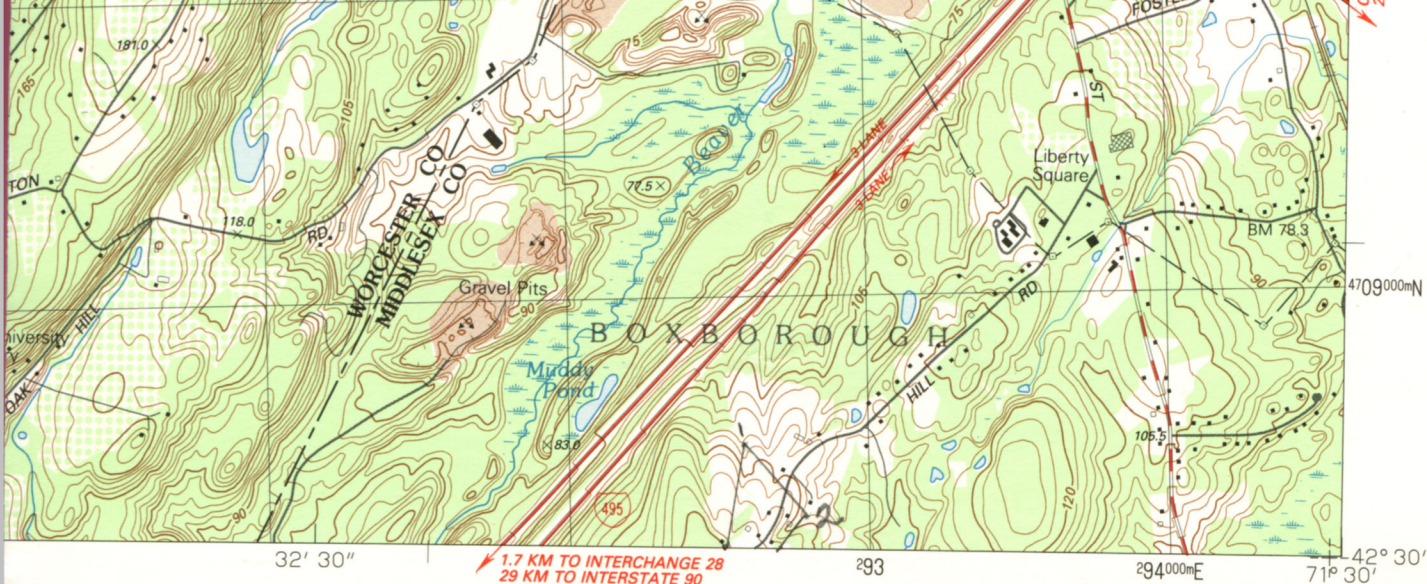


Scale: 1 inch = 279 feet
1 : 3345.49

- Easement - Right of Ways
- W District
- Buildings as of 2002

*BOXBOROUGH
OLDTOWN CENTER
HISTORIC DISTRICT
BOXBOROUGH, MA*





Boxborough old town center
(north end of district):

- | | | |
|---|-----------|---------|
| ① | 19 292580 | 4708500 |
| ② | 19 292760 | 4708240 |

AYER, MASSACHUSETTS
42071-E5-TM-025

1988

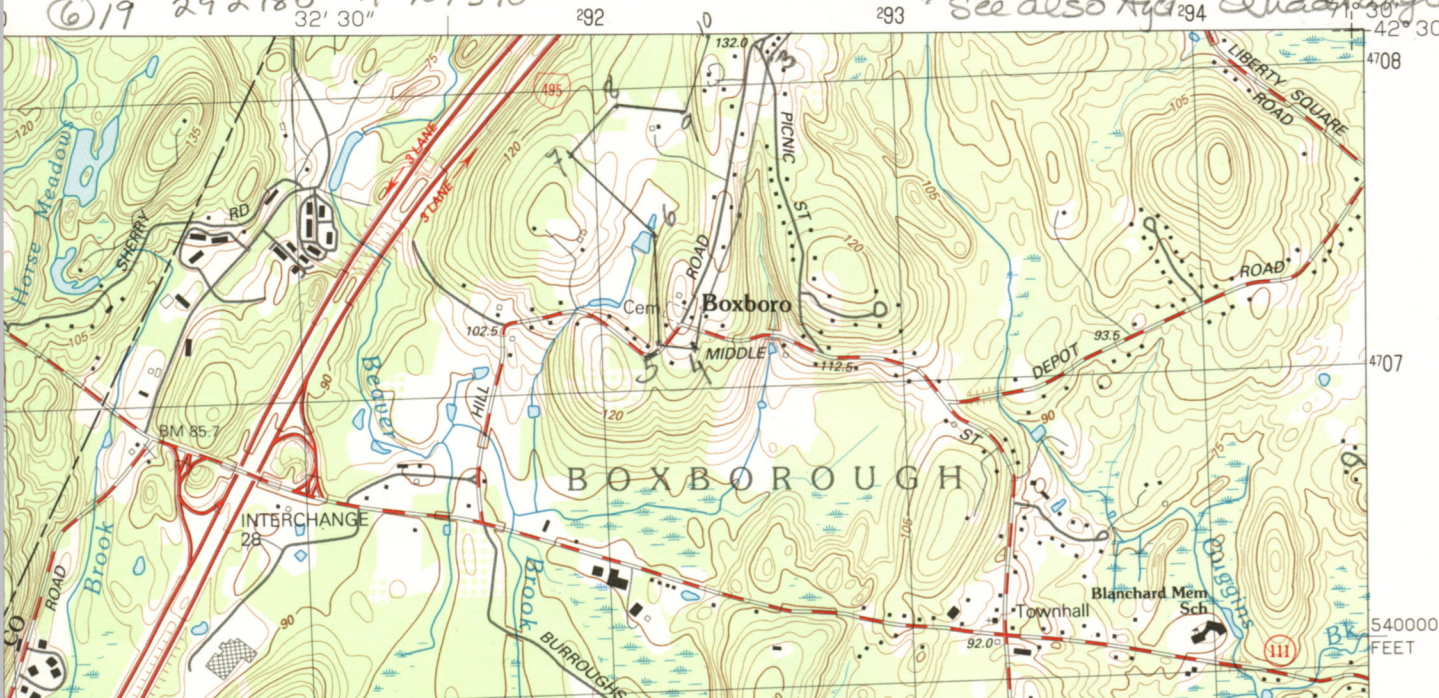
BOXBOROUGH OLD TOWN CENTER*

③	19 292580	4708100
④	19 292300	4707120
⑤	19 292180	4707140
⑥	19 292180	4707540

- | | | |
|---|-----------|---------|
| ⑦ | 19 291900 | 4707820 |
| ⑧ | 19 292080 | 4707960 |
| ⑨ | 19 292300 | 4707920 |
| ⑩ | 19 292400 | 4708160 |

7.5 X 15 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

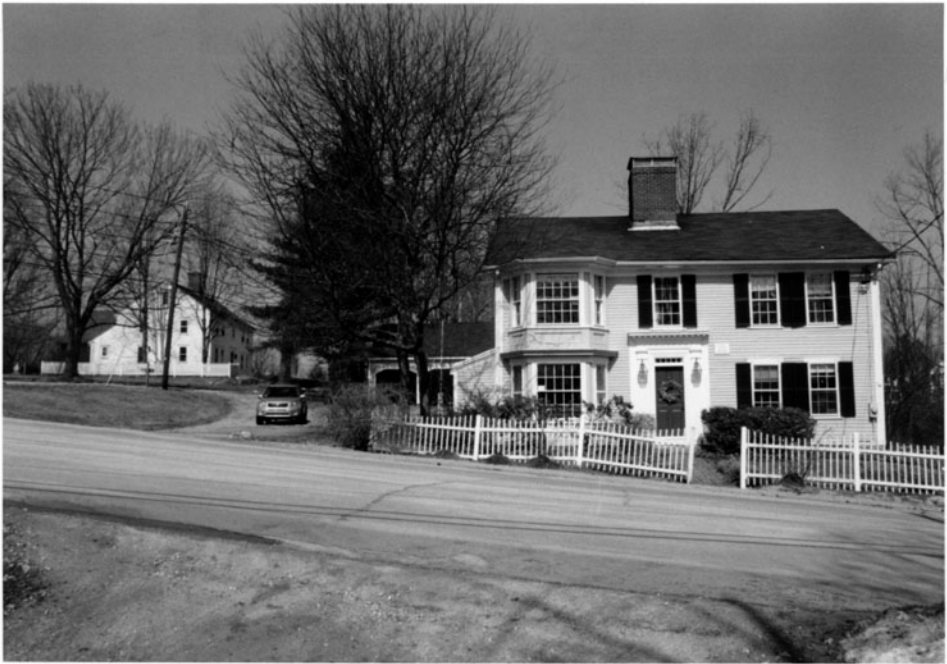
See also Ayer Quadrangle





1. View north to 438 Hill Road, meetinghouse site, North Burying Ground, and 462 Hill Road
2. 429 Hill Road, Judah Wetherbee House, ca. 1783 with later additions





3. View north, with 462 Hill Road and 593 Middle Road (ca. 1796 and ca. 1795)

4. North Burying Ground, ca. 1776: line of burial vaults, looking south





5. 462 Hill Road, Parsonage/Rev. Joseph Willard House, ca. 1796, with barn, 1886

6. 533 Hill Road, Dr. Daniel Robbins House, 1804, with 1870s barn





7. 604 Hill Road, Silas Wetherbee House, ca. 1770

8. School #2, 339 Picnic Street, ca. 1852: view southeast





9. 799 Hill Road: District #2 School/Sally Draper House, 1808

10. 828 Hill Road, Reuben Mead Draper House, ca. 1851: looking south





11. Old Town Common, ca. 1783: looking southeast

12. North Burying Ground, ca. 1776: view east to meetinghouse site



13.



14.



15.

13. View south on Hill Road over parsonage field to 462 Hill Road

14. 604 Hill Road, Silas Wetherbee Farm: view southeast over pastures

15. 604 Hill Road, Silas Wetherbee Farm: pond, ca. 1950s: looking southeast



16. 604 Hill Road. Silas Wetherbee Farm: cow pass under farm lane, looking north

17. 613 Hill Road, ca. 1920





18. 657 Hill Road, Allen McLane House, ca. 1795/1932

19. 742 Hill Road: William LaFleur House, 1950





20.



21.

20. Intersection of Hill Road and Picnic Street, looking east, with School #2, signboard, and town well

21. 796 Hill Road, Ephraim Whitcomb House, 1814: view north