

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Otis Center Historic District

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:
 N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 11-29 East Otis Rd., 12-41 Monterey Rd., 14-144 North Main Road, 8-120 South Main Rd., 25 & 37 Witter Road.

City or town: Otis State: MA County: Berkshire

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

<u> Brona Sumin </u>	<u> February 17, 2022 </u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	SHPO
Date	
_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	Date

Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>57</u>	<u>7</u>	buildings
<u>4</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>64</u>	<u>8</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/hotel/secondary structure
COMMERCE/TRADE/department store/ business
SOCIAL/meeting hall
GOVERNMENT/town hall, post office
INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility
EDUCATION/library, school
RELIGION/religious facility/church/church-related residence/parsonage
AGRICULTURE/agricultural field, animal facility/agricultural outbuilding
LANDSCAPE/natural feature/river

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling
COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant
GOVERNMENT/town hall/fire station/post office
EDUCATION/library
RELIGION/religious facility
AGRICULTURE/agricultural field, agricultural outbuilding
LANDSCAPE/plaza/unoccupied land/natural feature/river

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EARLY REPUBLIC/Federal
MID-19TH C./Greek Revival/Gothic Revival, Italian Villa
LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne
LATE 19TH & 20TH C. REVIVALS/Colonial Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: WOOD/weatherboard, BRICK, ASPHALT, SYNTHETICS/vinyl

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Otis Center is the largest of three villages in the town of Otis in the easternmost part of Berkshire County in western Massachusetts. The Otis Center Historic District is a 111-acre section of town laid out on the east and west sides of North Main Road and South Main Road (Route 8) and includes a few lots on the north and south sides of East Otis Road and Monterey Road (Route 23) at their crossing of Main Road. The district is traversed from north to south by the West Branch of the Farmington River, which forms portions of its eastern boundary. It is a district with religious, civic, commercial, and residential buildings and a burial ground dating from ca. 1777 to the present. Buildings range from the Federal style through the Modern and are described below in chronological order by style. Eight non-contributing resources (seven buildings and one structure) date outside the period of significance. Of the seven noncontributing buildings, two are small outbuildings. The district has historic integrity retaining its aspect of a well-preserved village center. Contributing to its integrity is the range of historic resource types that are present from residential buildings and outbuildings, to 19th-century commercial and formerly industrial buildings. Religious and educational buildings and a burial ground all contribute to this small historic village. Beyond resource types the center's integrity is supported by its range of architectural styles and the presence of two relatively high-style churches, one in the Federal style, and one in the Gothic Revival style.

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

The district setting is distinctly rural with wooded hills to the west, and open fields and woods of the West Branch of the Farmington River valley to north, south, and east. Buildings are set close to the road and are clearly visible with few exceptions. The rock-strewn river winds along the eastern boundary of the district through a riverine environment of dense marsh grasses.

Narrative Description

Federal

Dating from the beginning of the Federal Period is the **Otis Center Cemetery, 41 Monterey Road, ca. 1777 (OTS.804; Photo 1)**. The cemetery is on a parcel of hillside land over five acres in size. The oldest markers are those closest to the road with the more recent markers uphill and to the west. The cemetery has a stone wall on the east that separates it from the lot of St. Paul's Church. The stone wall becomes a stone embankment toward the top of the hillside where the land drops off to a wetland and pond. Several tarmac ways rise and curve within the cemetery to reach its furthest extent on the west and north. The cemetery has a grass landscape with mature maple and oak trees throughout. An *allée* of maples mid-way across the property line each side of what was a former pathway. Stones in the cemetery are mainly slab in form, with obelisks a distant second in number. Markers are predominantly individual rather than family compositions and are in marble and granite with a very few in zinc and fieldstone. There is a one-story wood-frame winter holding building on the east. A one-story maintenance building is on the southwest section of the cemetery adjacent to a small shed. The earliest stone noted is 1777 and burials continue to the present.

The earliest Federal-style building in the Otis Center district is **Squire Babil Seymour's Store, 27 North Main Road, ca. 1790 (OTS.6; Photo 2)**. It is a 2½-story, east-facing building that is gabled on the north and hipped on the south where it intersects with a later-added cross-gable. The clapboard-sided building has a one-story wing set back from the façade on its south elevation, and a 1½-story wing on its north elevation for a complex plan. The southern half of the main block of the store beneath the cross-gable is three bays wide with a center entrance whose surround is a moulded architrave. The northern half of the main block is an asymmetrical four bays wide with a broad Greek Revival-style entrance framed by full-length sidelights. Adjacent to the broad entry on the south is a narrower entry that appears to replace an original window, followed on the north by two windows with 12/12 sash. The two halves of the façade are flush. Windows in both halves have 12/12 sash and in the southern half the first-floor windows are full-length in a manner that was more common in the 1850s than in 1790s and have wood replacement sash whose muntins have a square profile rather than moulded. The eaves in the cross-gable section make a full return to create a pediment. The larger entry in the northern half of the main block has a plain surround with no remaining lintel. Its door within the broad surround has two rows of three vertical panels. The first section of wing on the north has an entry followed by a three-sided oriel. The second section is a garage with a pair of doors, ornamented with cross-bucks, and sliding on an exterior track. The roof over the first section is metal shingles, while above the garage the roof has asphalt shingles.

The **John and Samantha Spear House at 46 South Main Road, ca. 1805 (OTS. 17; Photo 3)**, is Federal in style and shares with the Federal **Lester Filley House at 69 North Main Road** its front-gable form (See below; Photo 4). This is a characteristic of the Federal style in Otis not frequently found in western Massachusetts where the side-gable and hipped roofs were more common. It is a 2½-story house three bays wide and four bays deep. There is a 1½-story ell on the west from which a one-story, shed-

Otis Center Historic District

Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts

County and State

roofed wing projects on its south elevation. The east-facing house is clapboard-sided and has a metal roof on which is a chimney centered on its ridge. The façade has a side-hall-plan entry whose trabeated surround encloses an elliptical, four-light fanlight. In the gable of the façade, eaves return to form a pediment in whose field is a wood patera centered in an opening that appears originally to have been larger and is now partially enclosed. A three-sided oriel has been installed on the south elevation of the main block. It has windows at each side with 9/9 sash creating a Palladian window-like composition. Elsewhere in the main block, sash is 2/2.

The Moses and Henrietta Day House, ca. 1790 (OTS.7; Photo 5), is located at 22 North Main Road.

Built in the Federal style, ca. 1790, the house was altered several times to serve new functions. It is one of the early houses in the Center from the Federal stylistic period to present its gable end to the street. This orientation was not to become common in other Berkshire County towns until after 1820. The 2½-story house has a two-story ell on its east elevation followed by an attached one-story shed. The main block and first ell are vinyl-sided; the shed is unpainted clapboard-sided. West-facing, the house is three bays wide and the equivalent of five bays deep. There is an added wooden ramp across the façade leading to a side-hall-plan entry. Despite alterations, much of the architectural detail of the façade remains visible and is well developed. Broad fluted pilasters frame the façade and support the vinyl-covered entablature beneath the pedimented gable end, which was originally flushboard-sided. The entry surround is Federal in style, trabeated and consists of narrow fluted pilasters supporting and rising through an entablature with a narrow architrave and very wide frieze, to end at a projecting cornice. The door itself is a replacement. One window at the first story of the façade was altered first to become a door and then covered by vinyl siding, but the second window and those of the second floor have molded architrave surrounds with bull's-eye corner blocks.

The most notable Federal-style building in the district is the **Otis Congregational Church of 1814 (OTS.1; Photo 6)**. It is a two-story building with its gable end to the street; its long elevation is six bays. Entry to the church is through a two-storied, pedimented entrance bay on the façade. The entry is centered and has a trabeated surround in which pilasters support a classically ornamented, full entablature. The frieze of the entablature is ornamented with triglyphs and metopes, beneath a deep pediment decorated with modillion blocks. Above the entry at second-floor level is a Palladian window composition with leaded glass. A two-stage tower set back from the edge of the entrance bay's roof spans the junction of the entrance bay and the church body. The first stage is square in plan, has a Palladian window composition on its west elevation, and windows on its north and south elevations with 9/6 sash. Its roof is ornamented with a balustrade whose corner posts are topped by urns. The second stage is an open belfry under a bell-cast roof supported by eight Doric columns.

There are several other Federal-style houses in the district. In brick is the **Lester and Corintha Filley House, 69 North Main Road, ca. 1815 (OTS.2; Photo 4)**. Two-and-a-half stories in height, the house has a front-gable roof whose eaves make full returns to form a pediment. East-facing, the main block of the house is three bays wide and four bays deep. It has a 1½-story brick ell followed by a 1½-story clapboard-sided frame ell for a long, rectangular plan. The façade of the house has a side-hall-plan entry beneath an elliptical fanlight with leaded glass. The elliptical fanlight is repeated in the tympanum of the façade. Window and door sills and lintels are painted stone and there is a stone watertable around the main block. On the south side of the roof of the main block are two interior chimneys. No chimneys appear on its north side as is often the case with Federal-style buildings. The façade's Federal features include classically derived modillion blocks that ornament the cornice and raking cornice. The brick ell has through-cornice dormers on both south and north elevations and on the south is a full-width, glass-enclosed porch, which is a later addition. The frame section of the ell opens on the south elevation as a

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

small barn with sliding barn doors on a track. Attached to this barn section of the ell and extending to the south is a two-bay garage. In the yard south of the house is the north-facing, **Lyman and Ruth Osborne House, 69 North Main Road, ca. 1828 (OTS.75)**, under a side-gable roof. Clapboard sided, the 1½-story cape is three bays wide with a center entry flanked by two windows.

At **70 South Main Road is the Lyman and Sarah Strickland House, ca. 1829 (OTS.21; Photo 7)**, a Federal-period building thought to have originally been a barn built ca. 1829 and converted to a house in the late 19th century. Its gable end is to the street. Two-and-a-half stories in height, the clapboard-sided building has a two-story ell on the west followed by a one-story ell. The main block is three bays wide and an equivalent of five bays deep. The façade has a side-hall-plan entry whose trabeated surround has narrow pilasters supporting an entablature with a wide frieze and projecting cornice. Eaves in the gable end make short returns. Sash in the main block is 12/12—a later alteration replacing 2/2 windows present in 1983—except for the attic-level window that has 9/6, likely an original barn configuration. Crossing the façade is a full-width porch under a hipped roof supported by posts and pilasters. The porch dates after 1983, replacing a porch on Queen Anne-style turned posts. Current chamfered posts have moulding bands positioned to suggest high plinths in Italianate fashion. On the south elevation is a three-sided bay window and on the roof is a single, large chimney at the ridge. There is a **guest house/play house, ca. 1990**, west of the main house.

Greek Revival

The Greek Revival style was current at a prosperous time in Otis Center's history, which meant that a relatively large number of its buildings were constructed in the style and constructed with attention to the details of the style. Perhaps the earliest version of the style to appear in the Center is the **Calvin and Sylvia Barker House at 60 South Main Road, from 1826 (OTS.20; Photo 8)**. It is an unusual version of the Greek Revival style as, like most of Otis Center's Greek Revival houses, it has a front gable roof with returns to create a pediment, but here the entire façade is flushboard to suggest the stone of a temple. Pilasters form the cornerboards of the three-bay façade that has a side-hall-plan entry. The entry has a Greek Revival-style trabeated surround with pilasters supporting an entablature. The door itself is an Italianate replacement with a double-arched glass upper half. Unusual is the seven-bay elevation of north and south creating an extended rectangular plan. There is a two-story ell on the west. A later addition, a wraparound porch under a hipped roof, extends across the south elevation and façade. It rests on chamfered posts between which are square baluster railings. One bay of the porch on the south elevation has been enclosed and has a pair of French doors as a secondary entry to the house. Sash in the house is 12/12. Two chimneys are set on the roof ridge of the main block of the house.

At **73 South Main Road (Photos 10 and 11)** is another early version of the style in the Center, the **Henry W. and Lucinda Porter House of 1833–1834 (OTS.19), and cabinet shop, ca. 1838 (OTS.18)**. Like most of the other Greek Revivals in Otis Center, the 2½-story house presents its gable end to the street, and like its neighbor at **78 South Main Road**, it has one-story wings at each side. The vinyl-sided main block is three bays wide and the equivalent of five bays deep. A later-added (ca. 1920s) wraparound porch at first-story level crosses from north to west to south elevations obscuring the original first story. Wide pilasters form cornerboards on the façade and rise to the entablature that consists of a wide frieze. Eaves make partial returns in the gable end, but a cornice in lower relief connects them to create a pediment. The gable field and tympanum contain a single horizontal attic window of a type found in several other Otis Center houses of the period. Windows are 1/1 vinyl replacements. The west-facing barn is an eaves-front form set into a low slope as a bank barn with an exposed basement level on the north, east, and south elevations. The clapboard-sided **barn, the former Porter and Carter Cabinet**

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

Shop, ca. 1838 (OTS.18), has a metal roof and on its façade two vehicle openings with double-leaf sliding doors on interior tracks. A third bay on the façade is occupied by a pedestrian door opening.

At **78 South Main Road, the Charles J. and Amelia Carter House, 1837 (OTS.22; Photo 12)**, is a 2½-story house with a front-gable roof and 1½-story wings at each side. The south wing of the east-facing house is in apparent collapse; the north 1½-story wing is intact. Like the **Levi and Lucinda Waters House at 144 North Main Road**, this side-hall-plan entry of the three-bay façade is recessed and its surround is a finely detailed, moulded architrave with rectangular corner blocks and a centered cartouche in relief. Within the recess, the six-panel door has three-quarter-length sidelights and paneled intrados. The door is framed with narrow, paneled, and pulvinated pilasters. The façade has a pedimented front gable in whose field is a horizontal window favored during the Greek Revival period; it has lost its original sash. A full entablature of architrave frieze and cornice surrounds the main block, though cornerboards are narrow. The north kitchen wing is three bays wide and two bays deep and there is a chimney centered on its roof ridge.

At **120 South Main Road** is the **George J. and Asenata Norton House, ca. 1841 (OTS.26; Photo 13)**, a two-story, east-facing, Greek Revival-style building with a front-gable roof. The house has a one-story wing set back from the façade of the main block on its south elevation. On the west are two ells: a 1½-story clapboard-sided ell and a one-story novelty-sided ell. In a rare version of the style, the façade of the main block is *in antis*: the flushboard-sided second story projects beyond the plane of the clapboard-sided first story to be supported on three posts. Two posts support the outer corners of the second story and the third is centered, creating a two-bay porch in front of a three-bay first story—an unusual arrangement. Three windows with 6/6 sash fenestrate the second story of the façade beneath a pediment whose tympanum is ornamented with a double rake. The south wing is two bays long with a recessed entry and a single window with 6/6 sash. The wing is one bay deep. The façade of the main block has a side-hall-plan entry with a plain flat surround and two windows with 6/6 sash. Wide cornerboards frame this story. The house sits on granite blocks.

Following the Norton House, one of the finest examples of the Greek Revival style is **144 North Main Road, the Levi and Lucinda Waters House, 1847 (OTS.29; Photo 14)**, that, although relatively small in size, is high style in design with more features of the style than are commonly found in western Massachusetts. The main block of the house is three bays wide and three deep and there is a 1½-story ell on the east followed by a second ell of 1½ stories of several bays and a wing on the north containing a two-bay garage for a complex plan. Its 1½-story main block has a front-gable roof whose eaves make full returns to create a temple-like pediment. The west-facing façade is three bays wide, the bays articulated by battered pilasters set on high plinths. Doric pilasters rise to support an entablature consisting of an architrave and frieze below the projecting cornice of the returning eaves. Three attic windows with six-light sash punctuate the frieze in Greek temple fashion. At first-floor level the three bays contain a side-hall-plan entry that is recessed, adjacent to two windows with replacement 6/2 sash. The recessed entry is framed by a molded architrave surround with corner blocks at each side of a centered, rectangular cartouche. With the recessed entry the door is framed by full-length, twelve-light sidelights and transom. Asbestos-shingle siding is a later alteration. The first ell has a recessed porch on its south elevation and the second ell has a large interior chimney. The second ell is three bays long and has an end entrance under a braced, front-gable portico and a nine-paneled door. Aside from the exceptions noted above, sash in the building is 6/6.

The **Jonathan and Harriet Jackson House, 20 South Main Road, ca. 1858 (OTS.12; Photo 18)**, is a front-gabled, 2½-story house that has been sided with aluminum and its windows replaced with vinyl 1/1

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

sash. East-facing and on granite-block foundations, it is three bays wide and four deep. The side-hall-plan entry has a trabeated door surround whose lintel is pedimented in Greek Revival fashion. This is the only example of that type of door surround in Otis Center. On the northwest side of the house is a 2½-story, clapboard-sided **Ezra Jackson Wheelwright Shop, ca. 1880 (OTS.91)**. Front-gable to the road, at the first story the shop has a pair of vehicle entries with double-leaf doors on strap hinges. Centered above these entries at second-floor level is a large hay-mow door flanked by a pair of windows with 12/12 sash. The presence of windows at the hay mow is unusual. A third window with 12/12 sash is found at attic level in the gable end.

The Pickett and Sears Store, 14 South Main Road, ca. 1840 (OTS.11; Photo 17), is a commercial block from the mid-19th century. Two-and-a-half stories under a front-gable roof, the aluminum-sided main block has an added, two-story porch on its façade, a 1½-story ell on its west elevation, and three wings on its south for a complex plan. The façade is typical of a commercial elevation with two large display windows flanking a center entry reached by a double-ramped, concrete stoop. The stoop extends across the width of the façade. Four Queen Anne turned posts are spaced across the stairs at first-story level supporting the second floor of the porch, which is fully enclosed. It has a solid railing below a bank of 1/1 windows topped by a flat roof. On the south elevation of the main block is the first wing, one story and one bay wide, that extends the length of the main block. Under a shed roof, it is entered on the east by a single pedestrian door. The first ell is visible only at the attic level where two through-cornice dormers are located. At first-story level it is covered by the second wing, a shed-roofed, one-story wing, two bays wide. This wing extends beyond the first to present a single pedestrian opening on its east elevation. It is attached on the west to the third attached barn wing of 1½ stories under a side-gable, metal roof. It is the same width as the second wing.

The former **Jackson Wagon Shop, ca. 1830**, converted to a house ca. 1880, is found at **33 South Main Road (OTS.15; Photo 15)**. Vinyl-sided with vinyl replacement windows, the 1½-story building represents the simplicity of vernacular rural architecture. Three by three bays, it rests on low brick foundations. Thinly boxed eaves make short returns and there are two knee-high windows at the attic level on the north and south elevations and nearly full-sized windows at the attic level of the façade. A Colonial Revival-style **garage, ca. 1950** is located south of the house.

Harmony Hall, 70 North Main Road, 1849 (OTS.3; Photo 19), is a fine example of a civic building in the Greek Revival style. The 2½-story building with high granite-block foundations presents its pedimented, west-facing gable end to the street, but it is a south-facing building with its center entrance on that elevation. The entry door is nine-paneled. There is a 2½-story wing on the east elevation. The façade is three bays wide and it has a front-gabled portico on braced posts over its entry stoop. A ramp is on the east side of the portico. The clapboard-sided building has broad pilasters in the Greek Revival style at its corners beneath an entablature of architrave, frieze, and cornice. A thin moulded file divides architrave and frieze. Centered on its roof ridge is a square cupola/belfry. Pilasters at each corner of the belfry frame its louvered openings and support its hipped roof above a full Greek Revival entablature.

The **Lucy Hunt House, 29 East Otis Road, ca. 1858 (OTS.32; Photo 20)**, represents a modest version of the Greek Revival style. The south-facing house is 1½ stories under a side-gabled roof. Clapboard-sided, the house at first story has an added, enclosed porch that crosses the façade and wraps around to the east elevation. The porch is vinyl-sided below a row of 1/1 sash windows. It rests on fieldstone foundations and likely dates from the 1930s-40s. Inside the porch is the original side-hall-plan entry that is recessed within a trabeated surround. There is a one-story ell on the north elevation and an exterior-wall chimney added on the east elevation of the house. What visibly identifies the building's style are the

Otis Center Historic District

Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts

County and State

two knee-high windows of the façade. These windows were favored by builders for their temple-like appearance during the Greek Revival period. There is a ca. 1940 garage in the side yard.

Site

At 37 Witter Road, near the Jarius and Electa Haskell House (OTS.96), is the **site of a former mill (OTS.HA.3)** built by Haskell in the 1820s.¹ The mill building foundations are located about 50 feet south of the Haskell house in a low area beside the river. Now no longer fully intact, the fieldstone foundations appear to define the presence of one larger building and two smaller, shed-sized buildings.

Gothic Revival

St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 13 Monterey Road, 1829 (OTS.1; Photo 21), the Center's only remaining Gothic Revival-style building, is set on a rise above road level.² The clapboard-sided building rests on granite-block foundations. Rectangular in plan, the church is east-facing and its three-bay façade has a center entry reached by a low stoop of stone steps and wrought-iron railings. Above the entry at the west end of the roof is a square, single-stage tower. The entry has double-leaf doors slightly recessed within an ogive-arched surround. It is flanked by a pair of tall, ogive-shaped windows consisting of four stacked sash of twelve lights below a three-part Gothic opening with curved wooden muntins. The three-part window with curved wooden muntins is repeated in the gable field of the façade. Three ogive windows are repeated on the north and south elevations of the church. The tower has a single, ogive-shaped and louvered opening on each of its elevations and its hipped roof is ornamented above the eaves with Gothic crenellations between corner crockets.

Italianate

The Alanson and Fanny Crittenden House, 87 South Main Road, ca. 1860 (OTS.24), was the first Italianate-style building to appear in the Center. The 2½-story, front-gabled house is three bays wide with a connector on its south elevation attaching a two-bay garage to the main block. Now vinyl-sided and with a vinyl replacement windows, the house has an Italianate arched window in its gable field, and second-story windows of the façade have projecting moulded lintels from its original construction. A full-width porch on turned posts is a later addition, but as an open porch with no railings it complements the Italianate style in the fashion of an arcade.

At **92 South Main Road is the Henry and Nancy Spelman House, ca. 1856 (OTS.23)**. It has had a number of changes to its fenestration since 1983, when it was added to the inventory of Otis, but retains its L-plan form and clapboard siding. The main block of the house with a front-gable roof is two stories in height and a narrow two bays wide. Beneath the eaves of the front-gable roof are Italianate brackets—the sole Italianate decorative feature remaining on the house. At second-story level, a semicircular fan motif above the windows is likely a later alteration from the 1880s or 1890s.

Helena Hall at 11 East Otis Road, ca. 1868 (OTS.9; Photo 22), occupies a corner lot and faces south. The 2½-story building on brick foundations is six bays long under a side gable roof on which is a

¹ Outside the boundaries of the district within the river bed are remnants of a former mill pond dam. The dam is no longer above the water level but can be traced by stones in the water extending about 20 feet between its banks. The dam is in town ownership.

² A small general store on South Main Street in the location of the current fire station had an ornamental bargeboard in Gothic Revival style according to an old photograph.

Otis Center Historic District

Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts

County and State

transverse gable—a roof form that was frequently used during the Italianate period. The façade has a full-width porch on chamfered posts that have arched braces at their eaves. Paired brackets ornament the eaves and the porch roof rests on chamfered posts with impost blocks. An arched Italianate window fills the transverse gable field and windows on south and west elevations have footed, crown-moulded lintels. The vinyl-sided building has vinyl fish-scale shingles in the gable ends though they would not have occurred in wood at the time of construction. The main entry on the façade has a double-arched glass-and-panel door beneath a wide transom light. There is an added bay window and an added exterior fire escape on the east elevation.

Queen Anne

A small vernacular form of the Queen Anne style is to be found in the **Mary Fenn and Arthur Somes House, 93 South Main Road, ca.1910 (OTS.93)**. This is a one-story, west-facing house set into a hillside so that on the east it has a fully exposed basement. The house has an end-gable roof from which a porch roof extends on its northern half. The porch is supported on turned Queen Anne-style posts. The house is three bays wide and two deep and is wood-shingle-sided. It has concrete foundations.

Colonial Revival

The **Congregational Parsonage at 32 South Main Road, a barn built ca. 1900 and converted to a house ca. 1904, (OTS.16; Photo 23)**, is a 2½-story building on fieldstone foundations, facing east under a side-gable roof. It is five bays wide and three deep and has a Colonial Revival center entry on its façade consisting of a pedimented portico on posts. The portico has square baluster railings between its posts. The door of the entry is enclosed by a flat surround. Surrounds on the first-floor windows have currently been removed to install 1/1 vinyl sash, but at the second story have been rebuilt. The mostly clapboard-sided building has narrow cornerboards and a wide skirt board above its fieldstone foundations. Small patches of added wood shingles remain. There is an interior chimney behind the roof ridge and an end-wall chimney on the south elevation. Two ells on the west double the size of the building. The first is 2½ stories and three bays long and the second is a 1½-story ell and approximately two bays long. There are two outbuildings: a single-bay **garage ca. 1920** on the north side of the house, and an **eaves-front barn, ca. 1910**, on the west.

Two houses built on land that had been owned by the Otis First Congregational Church on North Main Road are both Colonial Revival in style. At **32 North Main Road, the James and Augusta Clark House, ca. 1910 (OTS.86)**, is a 2½-story house under a side-gable roof. West-facing and set back from the road, the house is five bays wide and two deep and has a two-story stacked porch centered on its façade. This is a two-family house and the form with a stacked porch was more common in urban areas such as Springfield. Now aluminum-sided, the house has an integral garage of two bays in its exposed basement at its southeast corner. Next door to the north is **44 North Main Road, the Robert and Katherine Clark House, ca. 1910 (OTS.87)**. This is a two-story house, west facing. It is four bays wide and two deep under a side-gable roof that extends on the east to first-story level, giving the house's elevation a saltbox profile. Across the façade is a one-story, hipped-roof porch that is glassed in. Just south of the house is a **garage, ca. 1940**.

The **1927 Fireman's Hall, 72 North Main Road (OTS.28; Photo 24)**, is a modest, vinyl-sided, Colonial Revival-style building. South-facing, it is 1½ stories and has portico entries in the first and last of its eight-bay façade. It is three bays deep. The porticoes give the building its stylistic designation as they are pedimented and supported by posts and pilasters sheltering six-panel doors. Windows are double

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

hung and filled with stained glass on all elevations. There is cross at the west end of the roof at its ridge and roof eaves make no returns. The building has concrete foundations and an asphalt-shingled roof. The north elevation has an entry in its westernmost bay duplicating those on the south.

The Col. Samuel Pickett's Tavern/Day's Hotel at 8 South Main Road, ca. 1815, rebuilt 1929 (OTS.10; Photo 16), is a building whose first story dates from ca. 1815, but whose upper story and attic are a post-fire 1929 reconstruction. The ca. 1815 front-gable roof was rebuilt in 1929 as a side-gable roof. A one-story enclosed porch wraps around the front and side elevations on the south, east, and north. On the roof is a single interior chimney. The 1929 façade at second story is five bays wide with a blind center bay. Sash are 6/6 and 1/1. The early section of the building is clapboard-sided; the added porch is vinyl-sided and dates in its current appearance to the 1990s. There is a 2½-story ell on the west that is four bays long. Sash in the ell is 2/2. West of the building is a garage with novelty siding dating from the 1920s.

The **Otis Library and Museum** is a Colonial Revival-style building at **48 North Main Road dating to 1949 (OTS.4; Photo 25)**. Set back from the road and on a rise, it is west-facing. The painted cinderblock building is 1½ stories, and is five bays wide and three bays deep under a side-gable roof. There is a single chimney centered on its asphalt-shingled roof ridge and the off-center entry is preceded by a Colonial Revival-style pedimented portico on Doric columns. The wide entry door has a narrow surround enclosing the door and half-length sidelights. Three windows on the north side of the entrance have 1/1 replacement sash; the opening on the south side of the entry is a pair of windows with 1/1 replacement sash. The doubled window opening is repeated on the north and south elevations.

Ranch

The Robert and Mary Thomas House, 124 North Main Road, 1947 (OTS.89), is a classical ranch, being one-story with a cross-gable roof. Like other modern houses of the early 20th century it has a low form, with wide overhanging eaves. There is a recessed connector on the south end of the main block of the west-facing house attaching a two-bay, front-facing garage to the house. The exterior has a brick veneer below vinyl siding on the cross-gable section and vinyl on the balance of the house. There is a typical picture window in the cross-gable section consisting of a large center pane flanked by two-light side windows. A broad chimney sits behind the roof ridge.

Outbuildings

The **Merritt barn at 137 North Main Road, ca. 1900 (OTS.30; Photo 9)**, is set close to the roadway, the eaves-front barn is clapboard-sided under a metal roof on which is centered a large ventilator/cupola. The building has been converted to residential use with its entry shifted to the north gable-end elevation, where it is next to an added window. Two original stall windows also make up the four-bay north elevation. They have six-light fixed sash. The west elevation is blind. The square ventilator has louvered sides under a hipped roof topped by a weathervane. It originally was east-facing with a vehicle entrance that after 1983 was removed and covered with clapboards. Remaining are two transom lights beneath the façade eaves.

The **Charles H. Cornwell blacksmith shop, ca. 1890 (Photo 26)**, is found together with the **Cornwell Wagon Shop, at 12 Monterey Road, ca. 1890 (OTS. 83)**. Originally attached to the wagon shop, the northwest-facing blacksmith shop is 1½ stories under a front-gable roof. The façade has a hay mow door opening at its attic level and is two bays wide. On the southwest elevation (pictured) there are four

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

windows of 4/2 sash with an end bay entrance on the west. The board-and-batten entry door has strap hinges and the three adjacent windows have 12/12 sash. Clapboard-sided, the building has low fieldstone foundations, and a pair of garage door openings has been installed in its southeast elevation. The 2½-story wagon shop was detached from the blacksmith shop and converted to a house, ca. 1910. It is now vinyl-sided and has had multiple other alterations, so is front-gable and 2½ stories in form and is without a defining style.

Monuments and Landscape

On the town common on North Main Road is a **war memorial** consisting of three slab-form granite markers set behind a large circle of granite paving stones (**Photo 27**). The center and largest marker is about 4.5 feet high and is carved on the west with the insignia of the various branches of the armed forces. It is carved on its west side, smooth on its east, and rusticated on its remaining sides. Angled at each side of the center marker are two smaller markers about 3.5 feet high, each with a bronze plaque attached to its west side. The northernmost of the two smaller monuments reads, "DEDICATED TO THOSE MEN AND WOMEN LIVING OR DEAD WHO HAVE SERVED AND ARE SERVING IN ANY BRANCH OF THE ARMED FORCES OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA FROM THE TOWN OF OTIS. A SINCERE THANKS TO ALL THOSE FOR KEEPING OUR COUNTRY AND OTHERS FREE." The southernmost of the two smaller monuments has a bronze plaque on its west side on which is written: "In honor of the men and women of Otis who served their country in World War II." Below the inscription is a list of the names of those who served.

The **Town Common (OTS.900; Photo 27)** is a tree-shaded section of land lying between North Main Road and the Congregational Church. It is bounded on the east by a semi-circular drive leading to the church. The common is about three-quarters of an acre in size and is planted in grass. It contains the war memorial and granite paving circle at its western edge.

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

- A. Owned by a 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

Period of Significance

1777-1970

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Henry Porter, builder

Charles J. Carter, builder

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Otis Center Historic District is significant at the local level under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A the district is eligible in the Area of Community Planning and Development as an early crossroads settlement in southern Berkshire County. Under Criterion C, the district is eligible in the Area of Architecture for containing the finest concentration of historic architectural styles and types in the town, ranging from the turn of the 19th century into the mid-20th century. Its period of significance extends from 1777, the earliest known resource in the district (a gravestone in the Center cemetery), to 1970, the year of the last addition to the Center's school, after which no additional civic construction was made until the post office in 1980.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion C: Architectural Significance

Otis Center Historic District is significant in the Area of Architecture for the inclusion within its boundaries of the finest collection in the town of Otis of representative examples of styles that flourished in New England from the turn of the 19th century into the mid-20th century. A small village, it yet counts within its collection Federal, Greek Revival, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival buildings. At the same time, the district is typical of many 19th-century villages of western Massachusetts with the vernacular barns that supported agriculture, and shops that turned out carriages, furniture, clocks, and metalwork. Together, the stylistically distinct and the vernacular buildings represent architecture as it was practiced over the 19th century and into the 20th century in Massachusetts's small western towns and villages.

Four Federal-style buildings built between 1805 and the late 1820s set a high standard for the Center's residential and institutional architecture. The John and Prudence Spear house at 46 South Main Road is the earliest example of the style, a frame building that presents its gable end to the street, an unusual orientation for the Federal period. Elliptical fanlights ornamented the façade. The first grand Federal-style house was Lester and Corintha Filley's at 69 North Main Road. Being in brick with stone trim, gable end to the street, it would have stood out for its elegant details such as the metopes in its eaves and the elliptical fanlights at the entrance and in the gable field. But the Federal-style building of greatest significance is the First Congregational Church at 46 Main Road, where much of the vocabulary of the Federal style was put to use. The Moses and Henrietta Day House at 22 North Main Road appears to have responded to its neighbor, the church, with details more delicate than its residential Federal predecessors. Reeded pilasters and a trabeated door surround attenuated and topped by a full entablature, provided the house with strong high-style Federal character.

As Otis Center's most prosperous period of growth coincided with the Greek Revival stylistic period, the largest number of buildings are in that style. This period is also when Otis carpenters Henry Porter and Charles Carter were active building their own houses and several others attributed to them by local historians. Their work stands out for the high level of its architectural detail that exceed the more vernacular or ordinary versions also found in the Center built by other carpenters or housewrights. The Henry and Lucinda Porter House, 73 South Main Road and the Charles and Amelia Carter House, 78 South Main Road are exemplary. The two houses share a Palladian-like plan with a center block flanked

Otis Center Historic District

Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts

County and State

by lower wings, suggesting their designers were familiar with architectural handbook examples of Greek Revival plans. In details, the Carter House has a recessed entry framed by an architrave surround with corner blocks, a centered cartouche in the pulvinated lintel, and side panels. It is unique in Otis, and clearly was designed to advertise his skills as a housewright. The Porter House at 73 South Main Road has been sided in vinyl and had a porch added across its façade in the 1920s but its eaves returns and rake remain to suggest an originally higher level of stylistic detail beneath the siding, and even its diminished appearance suggests a skilled builder also using his own house to advertise his trade. The Crittenden House at 86 South Main Road slightly later in date retains its Italianate, moulded window lintels in high relief. Revealing the work of a well-versed builder/architect, the Asenata and George Martin House has a relatively rare elevation for Massachusetts with façade columns *in antis*. It is likely the work of Porter, Carter, and Crittenden.³ Finally, Harmony Hall at 70 North Main Road is a documented work by Porter and displays the skills of its carpenter/builders in creating a town hall/school with the large proportions suitable to a community building yet with the architectural details, such as its cupola/belfry, that set it apart from more vernacular buildings in the Center. While little is known about these housewrights/carpenters, and their works and careers deserve further study, the presence of multiple buildings in the town center by such skilled artisans is reflective of the prosperity of the area in the first half of the 19th century.⁴

At 144 North Main Road, the Levi and Lucinda Waters House, displays the familiarity its builders had with the temple-like decorative details of the Greek Revival. From attic windows to battered pilasters, the house represents a significant design achievement accomplished in a 19th-century rural village.

Standing outside the region's more established succession of styles was the Gothic Revival, which did not find favor in most western Massachusetts towns. Otis Center, however, is the site of one of the rare and fine examples in St. Paul's Episcopal Church, 13 Monterey Road. Following this faith's precedent, St. Paul's founders chose the Gothic Revival as appropriate for their Episcopal church. Ogive arches and a crenellated tower roof with crockets at its corners convey the medieval Gothic roots of the style and represent it well.

When the railroads failed to pass through Otis, its industrial and agricultural economy from the 1840s slowly declined and construction of new buildings became less common, and by the 20th century residential construction was modest. Subsequent stylistic periods saw less construction, so examples of Italianate, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Modern are fewer in number. The buildings built did, however, maintain the standards set by earlier architectural achievements of the Otis Center Historic District. By contrast, from the beginning of the 20th century, the village of East Otis attracted substantial summer cottage development around its reservoir, adding second home residents to the town tax rolls. Construction in Otis Center during the 20th-century is most notable for its institutional buildings, as it remained (and still remains) the institutional center of town. Of the institutions, a building serving as the town garage and fire station was built ca. 1900; Fireman's Hall was added in 1927; the Otis Library and Museum was built in 1949; Center School was constructed in 1948.

³ Among their known work is the Tyringham Congregational Church, about ten miles west of Otis, where architectural detail is close to archaeological in accuracy. The firm added Crittenden to its title after Alanson had joined ca. 1840–1844.

⁴ A discussion of the building trades relevant to this era in Massachusetts can be found in J. Ritchie Garrison's *Two Carpenters: Architecture and Building in Early New England, 1799–1859* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2006), especially pp. 15–27 and 75–91.

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

Criterion A: Community Planning & Development Significance

Otis Center is one of three villages in the town of Otis, the others being West and East Otis. West Otis remains as only a small cluster of houses at a crossroads, while East Otis is relatively extensive with commercial and residential buildings. East Otis was the first area of settlement in what was to become the town of Otis, beginning in the 1750s within the ca. 1735 land grant known as the Tyringham Equivalent, and later as Loudon. Otis Center's first settlement followed in the 1760s within the ca. 1735 land grant known as Bethlehem. Both villages were on waterways that attracted settlers: the Tyringham Equivalent was crossed by the 25 Mile Pond River; the land grant known as the Eleven Thousand Acres was traversed by a larger waterway—the West Branch of the Farmington River. In 1759 an east-west road was built to connect the two areas of settlement, and between 1750 and 1762 a north-south road that became Main Street in Bethlehem (the future Otis Center) was constructed creating a crossroads in this village. The presence of the larger, therefore more dependable, water source in Bethlehem, together with its having a crossroads that brought more traffic to the settlement, ultimately was responsible for the Center's development as the institutional, commercial, industrial, and residential center of the town; it remains the central village of Otis to this day. In contrast, after the establishment of Otis Center, East Otis village functioned primarily as a secondary commercial and residential area, which remains the case.

Otis Center has a significant place in the larger history of western Massachusetts where the bulk of settlement in Berkshire County came later and by fewer number of settlers than in the Connecticut River valley due to the difficulty of travel through its rough terrain. Rather than the mid-17th century plantations of the Connecticut River valley laid out as linear street villages meant swiftly to attract settlers, the large land grants of Berkshire County were set out in grid-like plots and often sat empty for decades until they were sold individually.⁵ Otis's later onset of settlement within one of the large grants—beginning in the 1760s with solitary families in the Center—gained in numbers only in the 1770s. Without the pre-planned linear street patterns of the 17th-century valley settlements, boundaries between the land grants were subject to change. Settling was made more attractive by allowing settlers to buy lots in adjacent grants and this led to the merging of townships that were named and re-named to reflect the actual pattern of settlements that had brought groups of families close to one another over time. From the 1770s through the first half of the 19th century Otis Center grew as a village, building a school in 1774, starting a cemetery ca. 1777, adding Bavid Seymour's Store ca. 1790, Pickett's Tavern ca. 1815, the First Congregational Church in 1814, St. Paul's church in 1829, and Harmony Hall in 1849. While expansion was curtailed after failure to attract the railroad, the village remained the central village of the town, and continued to have institutional buildings added as needed, with some residential development occurring as well, though it was limited. Otis Center Historic District's layout still represents this current of history, having been settled around the intersection of two roads near a tavern, a tannery, and two sawmills powered by the water of the West Branch of the Farmington River.

Chronological Development of Otis Center

Colonial Period 1675–1776

The town of Otis was generated through several land grant and township iterations along with name changes: first, as two separate entities or land grants laid out ca. 1735 by the General Court: the

⁵ Joseph S. Wood and Michael Steinitz, *The New England Village* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

Otis Center Historic District

Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts

County and State

Tyringham Equivalent and the Eleven Thousand Acres. Settlement of the Tyringham Equivalent began in the 1750s and in the Eleven Thousand Acres in the 1760s. Population was sufficient in 1773 that Tyringham Equivalent was incorporated as the town of Loudon, and not long after, in 1789, the Eleven Thousand Acres became the smaller district of Bethlehem. The second iteration took place in 1809 when Loudon and Bethlehem were joined and took the name of Loudon. Otis Center of today was part of Bethlehem. The conjoined town of Loudon and district of Bethlehem kept the name of Loudon until residents changed it to Otis in 1810 to honor Harrison Gray Otis of Boston.⁶

As settlement in western Massachusetts generally proceeded, among the first orders of business was the establishment of one or more grist mills, and the Tyringham Equivalent and the Eleven Thousand Acres were no exception. The first grist mill was in Tyringham Equivalent (now East Otis) in the 1750s, and the second was built north of the Center in Bethlehem in the early 1760s. Travel to and between the mills was facilitated by construction of a road in 1759 (now known as Route 23, East Otis Road, or Blandford Road) between East Otis and the Center as part of the Boston to Albany road. Settlement in the Center may have picked up with the greater ease of travel and once the road was in, two sawmills went up between East Otis and the Center joined by an ash collection business established by early settler Colonel Samuel Pickett in the 1760s.⁷ A tannery appeared early in the Colonial Period on the West Branch of the Farmington River established by Joel Kilborn, one of the first Bethlehem settlers. Light industry mainly required waterpower, so the Center located on the West Branch of the Farmington River and East Otis on 25 Mile Pond River were the foci of industry. Samuel Pickett's primary business was a tavern he kept in the Center to serve travelers along the Boston to Albany road. It appears first on the 1794 series map of Massachusetts but the residential Center was forming in the 1770s as reflected in establishment of the first schoolhouse there in 1774.

Along with their existential grist-grinding and sawmill needs, settlers had to attend to the education of their children. A small number of families, from the late 1760s and early 1770s when the first settlers began arriving, would have had their children taught either by qualified residents or by teachers whom they hired to circulate among the homes and board with them. When the population was large enough to require a schoolhouse rather than a circulating teacher, one was constructed in the Center near the cemetery in 1774. Though accounts vary, it appears that town meetings were initially held in people's homes, then in the new schoolhouse in the Center. With a schoolhouse that also served also as a district meetinghouse, the Center began to develop as the institutional locus of the Bethlehem district.

Federal Period 1776–1830

The population of Loudon and Bethlehem was so small at the time of the Revolution that only three men were called to serve. But following the Revolution, further concentration of governmental and religious functions took place in the Center and more families built along Main Road. Prior to 1777 land was set aside for a cemetery, and its oldest known burials, of two Norton brothers, are from that year. The first Bethlehem district meeting was held in 1789; in 1795 a vote was held for a building to serve as town hall and church to be built, though that was not to occur until 1814. In addition to Col. Pickett's tavern, commerce began to appear in the Center, joining industry: the first store, **Squire Seymour's Store, today at 27 North Main Road**, was established ca. 1790. In 1784 Bethlehem's population had grown to the

⁶ Josiah Holland, *History of Western Massachusetts*, vol. II (Springfield: Samuel Bowles and Company, 1855), pp. 540–543.

⁷ During this period, wood ashes were collected and soaked in water to create lye used in households for making soap.

Otis Center Historic District

Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts

County and State

point that residents voted to divide into four school districts, each of which collected its own taxes to operate. The Center was District #1 and, as noted above, already had its own schoolhouse.

Just as town meetings were held in people's homes, religious society meetings were also held there. Loudon's Congregational Society was first established 1770–1772, but its formation had been irregular with its first minister not having been ordained, so it was officially re-established in 1779 with seven members. Bethlehem set up its first Congregational Society in 1795. In 1807, Loudon's church burned down as it was being built, and after Loudon and Bethlehem were joined in 1809, Loudon was renamed Otis and the two Congregational Societies were joined to become the First Congregational Church of Otis. The united congregations set up a building committee in 1810 and by 1814 the **First Congregational Church of Otis (46 North Main Road)**, had been constructed and put to use as both a church and meetinghouse. Placement of the building back from the road on a small rise in the landscape facilitated formation and designation of a common for Otis Center. Land between the church and Main Road ca. 1820 became the acknowledged Town Common, further set off by a semi-circular drive leading to and from the church building and creating an eastern boundary.

As for the new church's appearance, Otis was in the forefront of Federal architecture. Around 1800, a design change was made in religious architecture in which entry to a meetinghouse was placed in its narrow, or tower, end, rather than centered on the longer side, as had been the practice. Changes like this were disseminated by architects' handbooks and by building committees' travel to surrounding towns to view their neighbors' meetinghouses. The latter was the case for Otis as the First Congregational Church of Otis took as its model the Winsted, Connecticut Congregational Church (now gone), whose church members had voted to follow. Horse sheds were a part of the meetinghouse complex and remained in place until taken down in 1933. For many communities, a spur to construction of an independent town office was the legal separation between church and state that took place in 1833 in Massachusetts. Otis, however, rented space in the new building for town meetings through 1872, keeping its civic life attached to its religious life for decades longer.

For the first year, 1814, ministers were lent from other congregations to the Otis Congregational Church, but then in 1815 Rev. Jonathan Lee was settled as its permanent cleric. Like many ministers of the late 18th and early 19th centuries, Lee was a scholar who became his town's first historian, writing "A History of the Town of Otis" in A History of the County of Berkshire in 1829. At the time he wrote, homes were still used as public spaces; Otis's first post office was established in 1817 and Squire Babil Seymour was appointed first postmaster distributing mail from his house.

The Center along North and South Main Road took on a substantial appearance during the Federal Period due the residential growth that complemented the institutional, industrial and commercial buildings. **Squire Seymour's Store** was a residence as well as store and was joined at about the same time by the **Moses and Henrietta Day House at 22 North Main Road (ca. 1790)**, where Moses Day worked as a clockmaker. **John Spear** (2), son of John Spear (1), one of the early settlers to Bethlehem district, arriving ca. 1790, built a house with his wife **Prudence** at **46 South Main Road** around 1805. **Lester and Corintha Filley** built their house at **69 North Main Road** around 1815, and **Lyman and Ruth Osborne** built the Osborne House that shares the same street number at **69 North Main Road ca. 1828**. A deed shows that **Calvin and Sylvia Barker** bought **60 South Main Road** in 1838 from Henry Porter who is thought to have built it in 1826.⁸ Around 1822 **Jarius and Electa Haskell** built the house at **37**

⁸ Calvin Barker was a carpenter, but any contributions he made to buildings in town are unknown.

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

Witter Road as part of Jarius's mill operations. **Penelope and Chester Cornwell, Sr.**, the latter a farmer and shoemaker, in 1830 built **14 North Main Road** where they lived with their three children.

The Federal Period was one in which religious diversity increased with Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists forming societies and joining the Congregationalists in western Massachusetts. In the early decades of the 19th century, these Protestant societies collected their own tithes and grew to build churches. In contrast, the Episcopal Church had been established from the 1760s and 1770s in the western part of the Bay State colony. In 1827, Otis lawyer Lester Filley (who lived at **69 North Main Road**); and several others formed the Protestant Episcopal Society.⁹ Rev. B. C. C. Parker, rector at Lenox, worked with Filley in the society's foundation.¹⁰ Two years later, in 1829, the society, under the guidance of Filley and Parker, built **St. Paul's Protestant Episcopal Church**. It is in the Gothic Revival style, whose source of inspiration is not known, though the Gothic style was traditionally favored by the Anglican Church. St. Paul's was a mission church, its supporting church being Old North in Boston, and it is from the latter that some of the furnishings such as pulpit and chandelier were brought to Otis. As a mission church, St. Paul's was not solely supported by its local members. Rather, it depended for some financial aid from the home church. At the time of its construction, St. Paul's became the fourth Episcopal Church Society in Berkshire County. There was a St. James in Great Barrington formed in 1761–1762; St. Luke's in Lanesboro, formed in 1767; and Trinity in Lenox dating to 1774. None of these societies has a building remaining from the 18th century, but Lenox's First Episcopalian Church was built ca. 1816, and it is now a considerably altered store on Church Street. Until the construction of St. Paul's, Otis Episcopalian attended services at the Lenox Church.

Despite its rocky soil, Otis during the Federal Period was a farming community, its farmers producing potatoes, oats, Indian corn, summer wheat, and rye. Better suited for livestock, there was good pastureland for cattle and sheep to be raised, and beef, pork, and veal were sold. Livestock required hay and farmers produced cheese & butter that appear as major products in the federal non-population censuses. Orchards were well-suited to the soil and maple sugar was also made in large quantities. After agriculture, lumbering was Otis's second-most-important occupation.

Early Industrial Period 1830–1870

By 1830, Otis Center was a thriving community for farming and industry led by second- and third-generation Otis residents. Farmers worked the land of their homelots but also bought and sold land on the outskirts of the Center. At **144 North Main Road**, Miles D. and Eliza Wells sold seven acres in **1847 to Levi and Lucinda Waters**, the likely first owners of the house at 144. With five sons, the Waterses had plenty of farmhands and became one of the most well-to-do of the town's farming families. In 1850 they owned 400 acres and their real estate was worth \$5,000 at a time when \$1,000 to \$1,500 was the average farm value.

The 1831 map shows the town had eleven sawmills powered by the West Branch of the Farmington River and several feeder streams. Gristmills were equally important to the community and there was one at the end of Witter Road, known at the time as Mill Road. This gristmill had been developed between 1820 and 1830 by Jarius Haskell.¹¹ In 1836 Haskell sold the mill, together with his house (**the Jarius and**

⁹ The Protestant Episcopal Church is more frequently known as the Episcopal Church.

¹⁰ S.P. Parker, "History of the Episcopal Church in Berkshire County" in Collection of the Berkshire Historical and Scientific Association, vol. 2, 1894–1899, n.p.

¹¹ Federal census and deed orthography has been variously written as "Jarius" Haskell and "James" Haskell. In other sources, his name is sometimes written as "Jairus."

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

Electa Haskell House, 37 Witter Road), to William Carter of Otis. William Carter was a carpenter so it is likely that he converted the gristmill to a sawmill after acquisition. William and Lucretia Carter's son Charles Carter was a lumber dealer who cut his own lumber for the mill working with his father until the latter's death in 1869 of typhoid fever. Charles, who with his wife Amelia Carter lived at **78 South Main Road**, added to the property including a dish mill (pottery mill) across the road near the mill pond. The house and sawmill were to stay in the Carter family until 1890. Another pair of Otis entrepreneurs, Linus Fay and Henry Williams, took over Carter's dish mill after 1850 and turned it into a woodworking shop making flooring, shingles, lath, bedstead slats, and boxes. Deeds describe dish fragments on the northwest corner of the property of Carters across the road, suggesting that the dish mill was not near the site of their house but near the mill pond.

William and his son Charles Carter continued to run their sawmill in the 1840s, but in the 1830s Charles had joined with Henry Porter to form a cabinet- and furniture-making firm that used the Carter-sawn lumber. Called Porter and Carter, the firm made furniture of all kinds in several buildings on South Main Road. They were joined prior to 1844 by Alanson Crittenden. They are known to have constructed buildings as well as cabinets and furniture. One of the firm's shop buildings remains—now the barn at **73 South Main Road**. The three lived at **Henry W. and Lucinda Porter House, 73 South Main Road; Charles J. and Amelia Carter House, 78 South Main Road; and Alanson and Fanny Crittenden House, 86 South Main Road**, respectively, and are known to have built houses in the area. The Calvin and Sylvia Barker house at 60 South Main Street is considered to be among them, and their own houses built in 1833, 1836, and 1838 are likely by the firm.¹² Following Charles Carter's withdrawal from the business ca. 1876, the firm was called Porter and Spear, as Henry Porter was joined by Sylvester Spear, a carpenter, who with his wife Harriet lived in his grandparents John and Samantha Spear's House at **46 South Main Road**. Sylvester was the fourth generation of the Spear family in Otis, beginning with settler John Spear (1) in Bethlehem. It was not unusual for families like the Spears to remain for generations in the town.

Parts of the essential industry for a community during this period were the blacksmith, the wagon maker, and the wheelwright, and at this time, there were two blacksmiths, two wagonmakers, and three wheelwrights in the Center. Among them on South Main Road, in 1850, were father and son Ezra and Jonathan Jackson who lived in a house that is now gone. In the 1860s wagon-maker Ezra Jackson had his shop in a building that had originally been a blacksmith shop, the William Marshall blacksmith shop at **33 South Main Road**, built ca. 1830. Ca. 1876, the Marshall blacksmith shop/Ezra Jackson wagon shop was converted to a house. It was owned in 1904 by Nellie Haskell and likely served as a rental house. Ezra Jackson died in 1856 and his home (now gone) was bought in 1858 by Volney Haskell, son of mill owners Jarius and Electa Haskell. Volney, a prosperous travelling salesman who bought and sold real estate in Otis, split off a portion of the Jackson homestead and gave it to Jonathan, who built the **Jonathan and Harriet Jackson House, 20 South Main Road ca. 1858**. Jonathan added at **#20 the Jackson Wagon and Wheel shop, ca. 1880**. Right across the street, at **27 South Main Road**, is a **wagon shop**, (original owner unidentified) that Volney Haskell bought by 1858, and which was later (ca. 1900) converted to another house.

Powering most of these light industries was the West Branch of the Farmington River, which runs through Otis Center. The presence of the river contributed to its growth as new residents arrived to take part in town commerce and industry. Residential building hit its peak during the Early Industrial Period.

¹² In 1844, as Porter, Carter, and Crittenden, the firm built the Greek Revival-style Tyringham Union Church (TYR.67).

Otis Center Historic District

Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts

County and State

From 981 residents in 1820, Otis grew to 1,224 people in 1850. Reflecting a degree of prosperity, in 1842 residents voted money for a school library in the Center that was to be set up in a private home. By 1849, the first schoolhouse was both too small and about 75 years old, so residents voted for a new Center school combined with a town hall. The result was **Harmony Hall, 70 North Main Road**, built by Otis carpenter and builder Henry W. Porter (presumably with his partners Carter and Crittenden). Harmony Hall was financed by and jointly owned by the town and a group of investors known as the Harmony Hall Proprietors. The proprietors rented out the second story, which, among other purposes, was used for town meetings. Among the Proprietors led by **Calvin Barker, of 60 South Main Road**, were Lester Filley of **69 North Main Road**, the three builders Henry Porter, Charles Carter, Alanson Crittenden, and shoemaker Chester R. Cornwell, of **14 North Main Road**. Meanwhile, the old school was moved north on North Main Road and converted to a house (now gone).

Building in the Center slowed after 1850 as families moved west to better farmland. By 1870 the total population had fallen to 960. The building that did take place was not insignificant, however. Named after Helena Day who owned the property on which it was built, **Helena Hall at 11 East Otis Road was built about 1868** by Emily and William Tinker (he was a tanner) with an inheritance from Emily's father. The **Dr. Henry K. and Nancy Spelman House at 92 South Main Road** went up ca. 1856 to house the town's new doctor who was a graduate of the Berkshire Medical Institute. The **Nathaniel J. Kenyon House at 102 South Main Road was built about 1860** for farmer Kenyon. **Asenata and George Norton** built their house **at 120 South Main Road** and George ran a harness shop and hardware business in the Center at Squire Seymour's store at 27 North Main Road. The **Lucy Hunt House, 29 East Otis Road**, went up about 1858 and housed Hunt's dressmaking business as well as her home. The **Pickett and Sears Store, 14 South Main Road, was built ca. 1840** and in 1858 held both the store and the Post Office. At the same time he established the store, Col. Samuel Pickett added to his ca. 1815 tavern to establish a hotel (Samuel Pickett's Hotel) next door to the store. After Rufus Smith owned the hotel in the 1860s, it was owned by Henry Day and became known as **Day's Hotel, 8 South Main Road**. William Marshall's wagon shop at 27 South Main Road (later a Jackson shop) was converted to a house owned in 1858 by Volney Haskell.

The industries on the West Branch of the Farmington River in the Center had created an economic momentum for the town of Otis from the 1820s through the 1840s. Then, however, it became evident that to continue and meet its competition, manufacturers would need to have access to a wider market through the railroad. In 1847 the town made its first effort to entice developers of a railroad line from Lee south to New Haven to pass through Otis. When the town's bid was rejected, a company in 1848 was formed of Otis residents to compete for a rail line. The company was not successful in attracting the railroad, and after a third attempt in 1864 it disbanded. Business and industry remained local; population fell and real estate values fell with it. Despite the falling population, 114 men volunteered or were drafted from Otis to fight in the Civil War. Fifteen died. From the Center, Henry A. Day served in the Massachusetts 49th and was in the battle of Port Hudson.

Industrial Period 1870–1915

The Industrial Period in Otis Center, post-Civil War, was relatively quiet. At a time when immigration changed the demographics of many cities and agricultural towns, Otis was not a draw for immigrants to its industry or agriculture. Otis's farmers continued raising livestock, and lumbermen continued to support many others in town. Lumber dealers were active furnishing other businesses such as a rake factory, and paper mill (both outside the district), and furnishing the on-going work of Otis Center's furniture makers, wheelwrights, and wagon makers. Two of the Center's residents branched out as

Otis Center Historic District

Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts

County and State

builders. Lumber dealer James Clark and his son Robert Clark, a teamster, bought land from the Congregational Church on North Main Road and built two houses **32 and 44 North Main Road, ca. 1910**. A **blacksmith shop** was added to the Center by Charles H. and his brother Chester Cornwell, **12 Monterey Road, ca. 1890**. They were sons of Penelope and Chester Cornwell, Sr. the cordwainer/shoemaker. Once double the size, the shop was later divided into two buildings, one becoming the house at **12 Monterey Road**. The William Carter sawmill (now gone) was one of sixteen in town in 1885 and continued to be run after its 1891 purchase by Durand and Fanny Witter, who lived at the **Jarius and Electa Haskell House, 37 Witter Road, ca. 1822**. **Day's Hotel at 8 South Main Road** was operated in the Center by Henry A. Day, and next door at 14 South Main Road, the Pickett and Sears Store had changed ownership to become the **Norton and Hawley general store**. **Samuel Marshall, 73 South Main Road**, who listed himself in the 1900 federal census as a "capitalist," took over ownership of the Henry W. and Lucinda Porter House and furniture business at 73 South Main Road. He had a portion of the shop demolished and converted the other portion to a barn. During this period **Helena Hall at 29 East Otis Road** housed a store and post office. At **11 East Otis Road, Lucy Hunt** continued to run her dress shop. Tanneries outside the Center supplied leather for shoemakers like Chester Cornwell, Sr. at 14 North Main Road and for shoemaker and store proprietors **John and Prudence Spear at 46 South Main Road**.

Despite what sounds to be a rather prosperous town center, Otis's population was declining to the point that for twenty years (1865–1885) St. Paul's Episcopal Church held no services. From the 1,224 adults in 1850, there were 785 in 1880. Harmony Hall's proprietors in 1878 sold their rights to the building to the town for a town hall. The town next took advantage of state support and in 1891 voted to establish a free public library, which was located for a time in the Center at the **John and Prudence Spear House at 46 South Main Road**. The Spears sold the house in 1891 to the Congregational Church for use as a parsonage. The church was not too long after in 1904 to convert a barn to the parsonage and the Spear House went to other, non-church, residential use. Between 1870 and 1887 the Post Office was located at the **Lyman and Ruth Osborne House**, 69 North Main Road, originally set close to North Main Road on the property of the Lester Filley House, sharing the same street address of 69 North Main Road, but now moved back from the road on its lot.

In 1891, Durand A. Witter bought the sawmill property that had been owned by the Carter family at the end of Mill Road for decades. The Carter mill in 1880 was the only lumber mill enumerated in the non-population schedules for that year in Otis. Durand at the time of his purchase is likely to have taken over Carter's three saws, one circular saw, and an industry that employed eight to ten men during the year. The sawmill worked six months of the year full time and six months half time. They kept a large inventory of lumber worth \$3,035 and in 1880 paid workers between \$1.00 and \$1.50 a day depending on their skills. Durand and his wife Fanny Witter gradually added acreage to their home and lumber mill operation at 37 Witter Road and he continued working as a sawyer through the 1930s, retiring in 1939.¹³

As industry waned, unused shops were converted to residential use by several of the Center's residents. Conversions had started in the previous period: by 1858 L. J. Strickland had converted a shop to the house at **70 South Main Road, built ca. 1829**. The blacksmith/wagon shop at **33 South Main Road, ca. 1830**, was owned by Ezra Jackson, was then converted to a house owned by W. F. Breckenridge prior to 1876. Next door at **27 South Main Road, ca. 1830**, was **the Marshall blacksmith shop, converted to a house ca. 1900**. All three of these converted buildings were likely used as rentals for permanent

¹³ In that year Witter gave the land containing part of the sawmill complex to the town, retaining just four acres for the house at 37 Witter Road. See Early Modern Period below for details.

Otis Center Historic District

Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts

County and State

residents. Volney Haskell, a real estate investor, owned 27 and 33 South Main Road ca. 1900 and they passed to his daughter Nellie Haskell by 1904. Ms. Haskell, author and Otis historian, recorded that **ca. 1904** a ca. 1900 barn at **32 South Main Road** was moved and converted to a house to serve as the **Congregational Parsonage**.

Farming gradually changed during the Industrial Period in the town of Otis. Around 1885, production of butter and cheese declined and the raising of livestock increased. But farms were being put on the market in large numbers by the first decade of the 20th century as young people left to earn more working in cities. The town had 785 residents in 1880, and in 1900 there were only 476. If there were to be no railroad coming through Otis to boost industry, some of its residents reasoned, the town's rural quality could be exploited economically. Thus, Otis and Otis Center joined nearly every other community in southern and middle Berkshire County in taking in summer guests during the Industrial and subsequent Modern periods. Proximity to eastern Massachusetts towns encouraged travel by stage for stays year round, but particularly during summers. According to Clark Bryan in 1886,

“Otis has for years been the resort of sportsmen and people fond of camp life. Its reputation stands high among such people in Springfield, and it is their habit to visit the town every year and stay as long as they can. Several residents of the town take summer boarders, who may be sure of good entertainment.”¹⁴

People came for vacation stays in local homes and others bought houses for an entire season's use. The Samuel Marshalls may have been among the first to use Otis as a summer or country residence when they bought the **Henry & Lucinda Porter House at 73 South Main Road** as a summer home ca. 1900.

Early Modern Period 1915–1940

Accommodation of summer and weekend guests continued in the Center several decades beyond 1900. Guests stayed in private homes and they stayed at Day's Hotel, operated by Henry A. Day until it burned in 1926. Three years later the hotel was rebuilt by Dr. George Crittenden with a new side-gable rather than front-gable roof, and returned to housing guests. Mrs. John Blackledge ran the **Charles J. and Amelia Carter House at 78 South Main Road** as a summer guest house, “Otis Villa,” but as the 20th century progressed, the absence of a nearby rail station limited the growth of the summer trade.

None of this attention from guests resulted in discernable growth in the Center, as guests continued to stay in existing private homes. One house appeared in the Center 1910: Mary J. Fenn Somes and her husband Arthur Somes, a Presbyterian minister and surveyor, built the house **at 93 South Main Road**. Mary J. owned the house jointly with her son Edwin Fenn. Despite little construction in this period, summer guests from Otis and nearby towns did come in large numbers to the Center for very popular music and square dance programs, and a building for these and year-round town gatherings was added to the Center in 1927: the **Fireman's Hall was built at 72 North Main Road**.

By the end of the Early Modern Period, the one industry in the Center, Witter's sawmill, had closed. Durand A. Witter, long a sawyer, in 1939 deeded to the Town of Otis land that included the mill pond (outside the district) above the dam (outside the district), a section of stone wall, while keeping the Haskell House at 37 Witter Road, the mill building, and two shed-sized buildings and several stone walls

¹⁴ Clark W. Bryan, *A new book of Berkshire*, which gives the history of the past (Springfield, Massachusetts: C.W. Bryan & Company, 1890).

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

south of the house.¹⁵ Witter died the following year and his family sold the remaining property at 37 Witter Road, which was subsequently divided in 1959. The house at 25 Witter Road was built on divided Witter land in 1985.

Modern Period 1940–1971

The Center has continued to be home primarily to year-around residents to the present. Commercial and institutional uses have been sustained but industry, as we have seen, ceased. One new house appeared, the **Robert and Mary Thomas House, at 124 North Main Road, in 1947**. Robert Thomas was an Otis school bus driver, and the couple lived in the Levi and Lucinda Waters House at 144 North Main Road until selling it in 1947. They carved a second lot from their property at 144 North Main Road to build this house at 124. The **Otis Library and Museum, 48 North Main Road**, followed in **1949**. It was designed to hold the book collection on the first floor and museum on the second floor. A planned ell with a librarian's apartment was never built. It was designed by Joseph Krendel from New York. Krendel was a Jewish Russian immigrant who came to the United States in 1913 and lived in Brooklyn with his wife Tamara, also from Russia, and their son Ezra. Joseph was practicing architecture as a sole proprietor in 1940 and continued through 1960, moving at that date to Manhattan. In 1949, in time for the school year, a new **Elementary School for the Center** was constructed at **1 North Main Road**. It was expanded in 1970 and subsequently became Otis's Town Hall.

Preservation Concerns

Several of the privately owned buildings in Otis Center are suffering for a lack of ongoing maintenance or occupancy. At least three historic institutional buildings are threatened with loss. However, the newly reconstituted Otis Historical Commission is working through creation of this historic district to raise residents' consciousness of the architectural and historic significance of the district and to locate sources of financial support for town-owned historic buildings. In particular, the Commission is working to bring St. Paul's Episcopal Church into town ownership to protect and maintain it for the future. They are also looking to find support for other town-owned buildings such as Harmony Hall and the library whose future is uncertain. Support of the historical commission through recognition of its historic Center will reinforce their effort.

¹⁵ See Masslandrecords.org, Drawer 230, McManus property for location of artifacts and property lines.

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Primary and Digital Sources

Ancestry.com. *Federal Censuses 1790–1940, and Massachusetts Town and Vital Records, 1620–1988.*

Crittenden, William Sumner. *Episcopal Watchman*, October 24, 1829. Accessed online.

MassLandrecords.com. *Middle Berkshire Registry of Deeds*, deeds and land plans, Book 356, page 548, 549; Book 337, page 440; Book 492, page 3, Book 695, page 554; Unindexed Plan Drawer 238, sheet 3

Secondary Sources

Bryan, Clark W. *A new book of Berkshire, which gives the history of the past.* Springfield, Massachusetts: C.W. Bryan & Company, 1890

_____. *The Book of Berkshire, describing and illustrating its homes.* Great Barrington, Massachusetts: C.W. Bryan & Company, 1886.

Dewey, Rev. Chester and David Dudley Field (eds.). *A History of the County of Berkshire, Part 1.* Pittsfield: Samuel W. Bush, 1829.

Garrison, J. Ritchie. *Two Carpenters: Architecture and Building in Early New England, 1799–1859.* Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2006.

Haskell, Nellie. *A Gift from the Past.* Wood, 1974.

Hawley, Barry. *Our Otis Heritage.* Pittsfield: Barry Hawley, 1976.

Holland, Josiah G. *History of Western Massachusetts: The counties of Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin and Berkshire.* Springfield: Samuel Bowles and Company, 1855.

Parrish, James and Massachusetts Historical Commission. *Structure Form (OTS.906) for Otis Reservoir,* typescript, 1982.

Bicentennial Committee Otis. *A History of Otis, Massachusetts 1773–1899.* Connecticut, Otis Bicentennial Committee, 1976.

Parker, S. P., D. D. “History of the Episcopal Church I Berkshire County” in *Collections of the Berkshire Historical and Scientific Society*, v. 2. Pittsfield: Berkshire Historical and Scientific Society, 1894–1899.

Shepard, George A. and Rev. Thomas Cushing (eds.) “Otis” in *History of Berkshire County, Massachusetts with Biological Sketches of its prominent men.* New York: J. B. Beers, 1885.

Sinnott, Edmund. *Meetinghouse and Church in Early New England.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1963.

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

Wood, Joseph S. and Michael Steinitz. *The New England Village* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

Maps and Atlases

Barber, Luke. *Plan of Otis in the County of Berkshire*, 1831.

Atlas of Berkshire County, Massachusetts. Pittsfield: Barnes & Farnham, 1904.

Atlas of Berkshire County, Massachusetts. New York: F.W. Beers, 1876.

Walling, Henry Francis. *Map of the County of Berkshire, Massachusetts*. Boston and New York: Smith Gallup and Company, 1858.

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): OTS. 1-32, 75, 77-96, 804, 900, 909-912

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 111 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 42.197507 Longitude: -73.091886
2. Latitude: 42.190921 Longitude: -73.088088
3. Latitude: 42.188911 Longitude: -73.091359
4. Latitude: 42.192188 Longitude: -73.095218
5. Latitude: 42.195801 Longitude: -73.096940

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Please see attached Assessor's maps 1 and 2. The boundaries follow the lot lines of the properties, which in some cases coincide with the west bank of the river. The lot line of one parcel extends into the river, as that parcel contains part of a historically significant site.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries follow the rear lot lines of a portion of the town center that contains a concentration of historic resources and that was traditionally identified on historic maps and atlases as the Center. See Figures 1-4.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Bonnie L. Parsons, consultant; with Betsy Friedberg and Ben Haley, National Register Director
organization: Massachusetts Historical Commission
street & number: 220 Morrissey Boulevard
city or town: Boston state: MA zip code: 02125
e-mail: ben.haley@sec.state.ma.us
telephone: 617 727 8470
date: 30 January 2019; revised 16 June 2021

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Otis Center Historic District

City or Vicinity: Otis State: MA

Photographer: Bonnie L. Parsons

Date Photographed: June 23, 2018 and August 8, 2018

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 26. Center Cemetery, view to northeast.
2. Squire Seymour Store, 27 North Main Road, view to west.
3. John & Lucinda Spear House 46 South Main Road, view west.
4. Lester and Corintha Filley House, 69 North Main Road, view to west.
5. Moses and Henrietta Day House, 22 North Main Road, view to northeast.
6. Otis First Congregational Church, 46 North Main Road, view to northeast.
7. L. J. Strickland House 70 South Main Road, view to northwest.
8. Calvin & Sylvia Barker House, 60 South Main Road, view to southeast.

Otis Center Historic District

Berkshire, Massachusetts

Name of Property

County and State

9. Mrs. Almora Merritt's Barn, 137 North Main Road, view to south.
10. Henry and Lucinda Porter House, 73 South Main Road, view to southeast.
11. Porter and Carter Cabinet Shop, 73 South Main Road, view to southeast.
12. Charles and Amelia Carter House, 78 South Main Road, view to west.
13. Asenata and George Norton House, 120 South Main Road, view to northwest.
14. Levi and Lucinda Waters House, 144 North Main Road, view to northeast.
15. Jackson Wagon and Wheelwright Shop, 33 South Main Road, view to northwest.
16. Col. Samuel Pickett's Tavern and Day's Hotel, 8 South Main Road, view to west.
17. Pickett and Sears Store, 14 South Main Road, view to southwest.
18. Jonathan and Harriet Jackson House, 20 South Main Road, view to west.
19. Harmony Hall 70 North Main Road, view to northwest.
20. Lucy Hunt House, 29 East Otis Road, view to north.
21. St. Paul's Episcopal Church, view to southwest.
22. Helena Hall, 11 East Otis Road, view to northwest.
23. Congregational Parsonage, 32 South Main Road, view to southwest.
24. Fireman's Hall, 72 North Main Road, view to northeast.
25. Otis Library and Museum, 48 North Main Road, view to east.
26. Cornwell Blacksmith Shop, 12 Monterey Road, view to north.
27. Otis Town Green and War Memorial, North Main Road, view to southeast.

Figures

1. Christopher Crary, District of Bethlehem (Otis), 1795.
2. Luke Barber, Map of Otis, 1831.
3. Henry F. Walling, Atlas of Berkshire County, "Otis Center," 1858.
4. Barnes and Farnham, Atlas of Berkshire County, "Otis Center," 1904.
5. Assessor's map 37 Witter Road.

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

**Otis Center Historic District
Data Sheet**

MACRIS	Map#	Address	Historic Name	Date	Style/Form	Resource	C/NC	Photo #
East Otis Road								
OTS.9	10D-35	11 East Otis Road	Tinker House-Helena Hall	ca. 1868	Italianate	B	C	22
OTS.32	10D-37	29 East Otis Road	Lucy Hunt House	ca. 1858	Greek Revival	B	C	20
	10D-37	29 East Otis Road	garage	ca. 1940	utilitarian	B	C	
	10D-36	East Otis Road	vacant lot					
OTS.77	10D-41	30 East Otis Road	Berkshire Bank	1980	Colonial Revival	B	NC	
OTS.78	10D-40	42 East Otis Rd	Otis Town Garage & Fire Station	ca.1900&1976	utilitarian	B	C	
OTS.79	10D-40	48 East Otis Road	Otis Service Center	1969	utilitarian	B	C	
OTS.80	10D-40	54 East Otis Road	Hamilton Barn	ca 1870	New England	B	C	
OTS.81	10D-40	62 East Otis Road	Samuel Hamilton House	ca. 1865	no style	B	C	
Monterey Road								
OTS.82	10B-5	12 Monterey Road	Charles H. Cornwell Wagon Shop	ca. 1890	no style	B	C	
OTS.83	10B-5	12 Monterey Road	Cornwell Blacksmith Shop	ca.1890	utilitarian	B	C	26
OTS.1	10D-3	13 Monterey Road	St.Paul's Episcopal Church	1829	Gothic Revival	B	C	21
OTS.804	10B-8-12	41 Monterey Road	Center Cemetery	ca. 1777		Si	C	1
North Main Road								
OTS.900	10D-30	North Main Road	Otis Town Common	1820		Si	C	27
OTS.909	10D-30	North Main Road	War Memorial	ca. 1950	slab form	O	C	27
OTS.910	10D-30	North Main Road	War Memorial	ca. 1950	slab form	O	C	27
OTS.911	10D-30	North Main Road	War Memorial	ca. 1950	slab form	O	C	27
OTS.84	10D-9	1 North Main Road	Center School	1949&1970	modern	B	C	
OTS.912	10D-8	1 North Main Road	school playground	ca. 1949		Si	C	
	10D-8	1 North Main Road	gazebo	ca. 1990	Queen Anne	St	NC	
	10D-9	1 North Main Road	two-bay garage	ca. 1970	utilitarian	B	C	

Otis Center Historic District

Berkshire, Massachusetts

Name of Property

County and State

MACRIS	Map#	Address	Historic Name	Date	Style/Form	Resource	C/NC	Photo #
	10D-9	1 North Main Road	one-bay garage	ca. 1970	utilitarian	B	C	
OTS.85	10D-7	7 North Main Road	Helena Day House	ca. 1910	Colonial Revival	B	C	
OTS.8	10D-34	14 North Main Road	Penalope & Chester Cornwell	1830	Greek Revival	B	C	
	10D-34	14 North Main Road	garage	ca. 1960	Colonial Revival	B	C	
OTS.7	10D-33	22 North Main Road	Moses & Henrietta Day House	ca. 1790	front-gable	B	C	5
OTS.6	10D-69	27 North Main Road	Bavil Seymour Hs. & Store	ca. 1790	Federal	B	C	2
	10D-5	31 North Main Road	Seymour garden shed	ca. 1920	Colonial Revival	B	C	
OTS.86	10D-32	32 North Main Road	James & Augusta Clark House	ca. 1910		B	C	
OTS.87	10D-58	44 North Main Road	Robert & Katherine Clark Hse.	ca. 1910	Colonial Revival	B	C	
	10D-58	44 North Main Road	garage	ca. 1940	utilitarian	B	C	
OTS.88	10D-57	45 North Main Road	Post Office	ca. 1980	Modern	B	NC	
	10D-4	North Main Road	vacant lot					
	10D-5	North Main Road	vacant lot					
OTS.5	10D-30	46 North Main Road	1st. Congregational Church	1814	Federal	B	C	6
OTS.4	10D-29	48 North Main Road	Otis Library & Museum	1949	Colonial Revival	B	C	25
	10D-31	North Main Road	vacant lot					
OTS.2	10D-2	69 North Main Road	Lester & Corintha Filley Hse.	ca. 1815	Federal	B	C	4
OTS.75	10D-2	69 North Main Road	Lyman & Ruth Osborne Hse.	ca. 1828	Federal	B	C	
OTS.3	10D-28	70 North Main Road	Harmony Hall	1849	Greek Revival	B	C	19
OTS.28	10B-15	72 North Main Road	Firemen's Hall	1927	Colonial Revival	B	C	24
OTS.89	10B-14	124 North Main Road	Robert & Mary Thomas	1947	Ranch	B	C	
OTS.30	10B-3	137 North Main Road	Mrs. Almora Merritt Barn	ca. 1900	eaves front	B	C	9
OTS.29	10B-13	144 North Main Road	Levi & Lucinda Waters House	1847	Greek Revival	B	C	14
		South Main Road						
OTS.10	10D-10	8 South Main Road	S.Pickett Tavern/Day's Hotel	ca. 1815&1929	no style	B	C	16
	10D-10	8 South Main Road	garage	ca. 1920	utilitarian	B	C	
OTS.11	10D-11	14 South Main Road	Pickett and Sears Store	ca. 1840	no style	B	C	17

Otis Center Historic District

Berkshire, Massachusetts

Name of Property

County and State

MACRIS	Map#	Address	Historic Name	Date	Style/Form	Resource	C/NC	Photo #
OTS.90	10D-42	15 South Main Road	Fire station	ca. 1990	Modern	B	NC	
OTS.13	10D-43	South Main Road	vacant lot (site of Waters store/post office)					
OTS.12	10D-53	20 South Main Road	Jonathan & Harriet Jackson H.	ca. 1858	Greek Revival	B	C	18
OTS.91	10D-53	20 South Main Road	Ezra Jackson Wheelwright shop	ca. 1880	New England	B	C	
OTS.14	10D-44	27 South Main Road	wagon shop	ca. 1830	front-gable	B	C	
	10D-44	27 South Main Road	guest house	ca. 1990	utilitarian	B	NC	
OTS.16	10D-12	32 South Main Road	Parsonage	ca. 1900&1904	Colonial Revival	B	C	23
	10D-12	32 South Main Road	barn	ca. 1910	New England	B	C	
	10D-12	32 South Main Road	garage	ca. 1920	utilitarian	B	C	
OTS.15	10D-45	33 South Main Road	Marshall blacksmith/Jackson wagon	ca. 1830&1880	Greek Revival	B	C	15
	10D-45	33 South Main Road	garage	ca. 1960	utilitarian	B	C	
OTS.92	10D-46	41 South Main Road	house	ca. 1900	no style	B	C	
OTS.17	10D-13	46 South Main Road	John & Prudence Spear House	ca. 1805	front-gable	B	C	3
OTS.20	10D-52	60 South Main Road	Calvin & Sylvia Barker House	1826	Greek Revival	B	C	8
OTS.21	10D-44	70 South Main Road	Lyman & Sarah Strickland Hs.	ca. 1829	Greek Revival	B	C	7
	10D-44	70 South Main Road	play house	ca. 1990	Colonial Revival	B	NC	
OTS.19	10D-47	73 South Main Road	Henry & Lucinda Porter Hse.	1833-34	Greek Revival	B	C	10
OTS.18	10D-47	73 South Main Road	Porter and Carter Cabinet Shop	ca. 1838	eaves front	B	C	11
OTS. 22	10D-15	78 South Main Road	Charles & Amelia Carter Hse.	1837	Greek Revival	B	C	12
OTS.24	10D-48	86 South Main Road	Alanson & Fanny Crittenden	ca.1860	Italianate	B	C	
OTS.23	10D-16	92 South Main Road	Henry & Nancy Spelman H.	ca. 1856	Italianate	B	C	
OTS.93	10D-49	93 South Main Road	Mary Fenn & Arthur Somes Ho.	1910	Queen Anne	B	C	
	10D-49	93 South Main Road	garage/shop	ca. 1970	utilitarian	B	C	
OTS.25	10D-17	102 South Main Road	Nathaniel Kenyon House	ca. 1860	front-gable	B	C	
OTS.94	10D-54	119 South Main Road	Farmington Diner	ca. 1974	no style	B	NC	
OTS.26	10F-49	120 South Main Road	Asenata & George Norton Hs.	ca. 1841	Greek Revival	B	C	13

Otis Center Historic District
 Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
 County and State

MACRIS	Map#	Address	Historic Name	Date	Style/Form	Resource	C/NC	Photo #
Witter Road								
OTS.95	10D-55	25 Witter Road	house	1985	ranch	B	NC	
OTS.96	10D-50	37 Witter Road	Jarius & Electa Haskell House	ca. 1822	eclectic	B	C	
	10D-50	37 Witter Road	barn	ca. 1880	eaves front	B	C	
OTS.HA. 3	10D-50	37 Witter Road	mill site	1820s		Si.	C	

	Contributing	Non-contributing
Buildings	57	7
Structures	0	1
Objects	3	0
Sites	4	0
Total	64	8

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

Figures

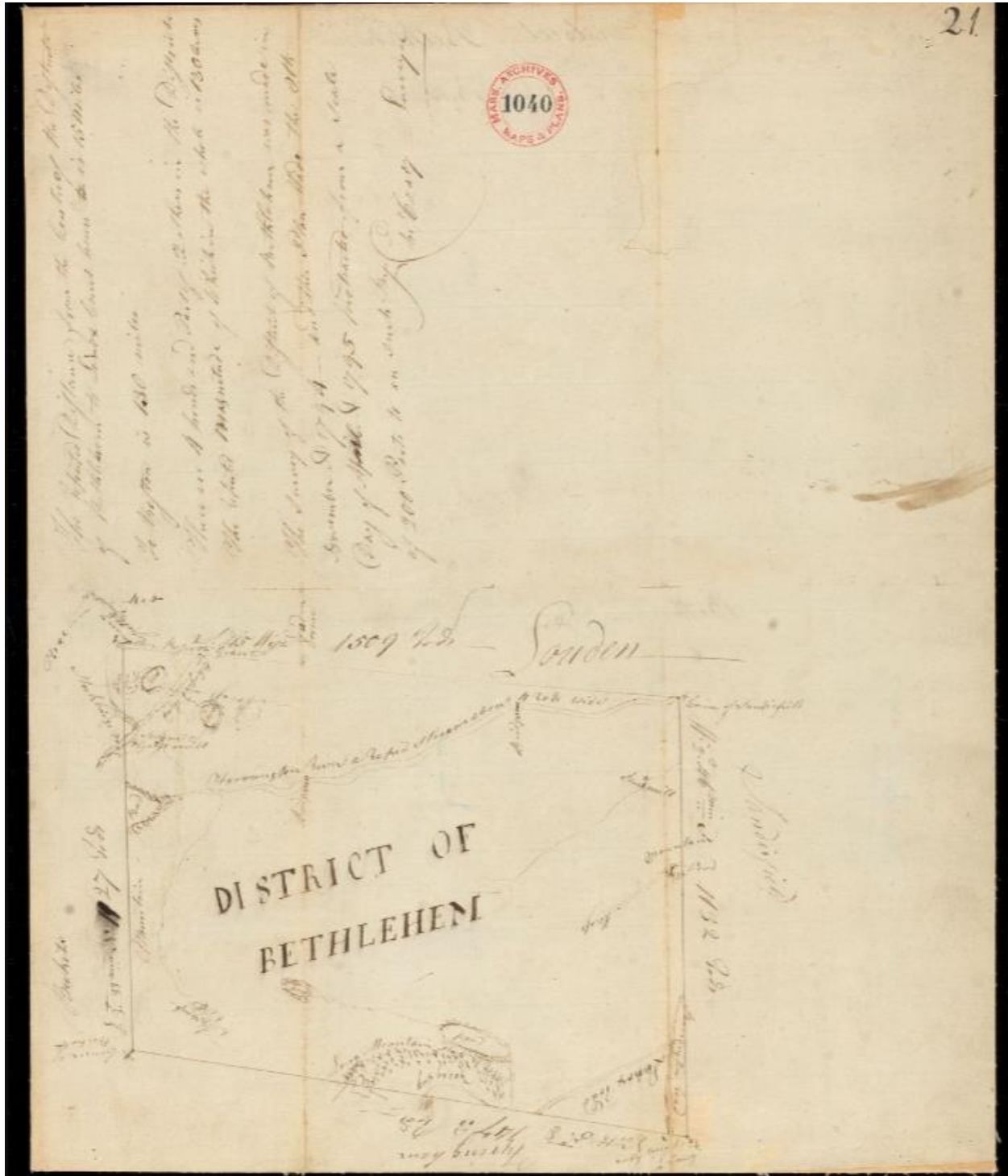


Figure 1. Christopher Crary, Plan of District of Bethlehem (Otis), 1795.

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State



Figure 2. Luke Barber, Plan of Otis, dated March 10, 1831.

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

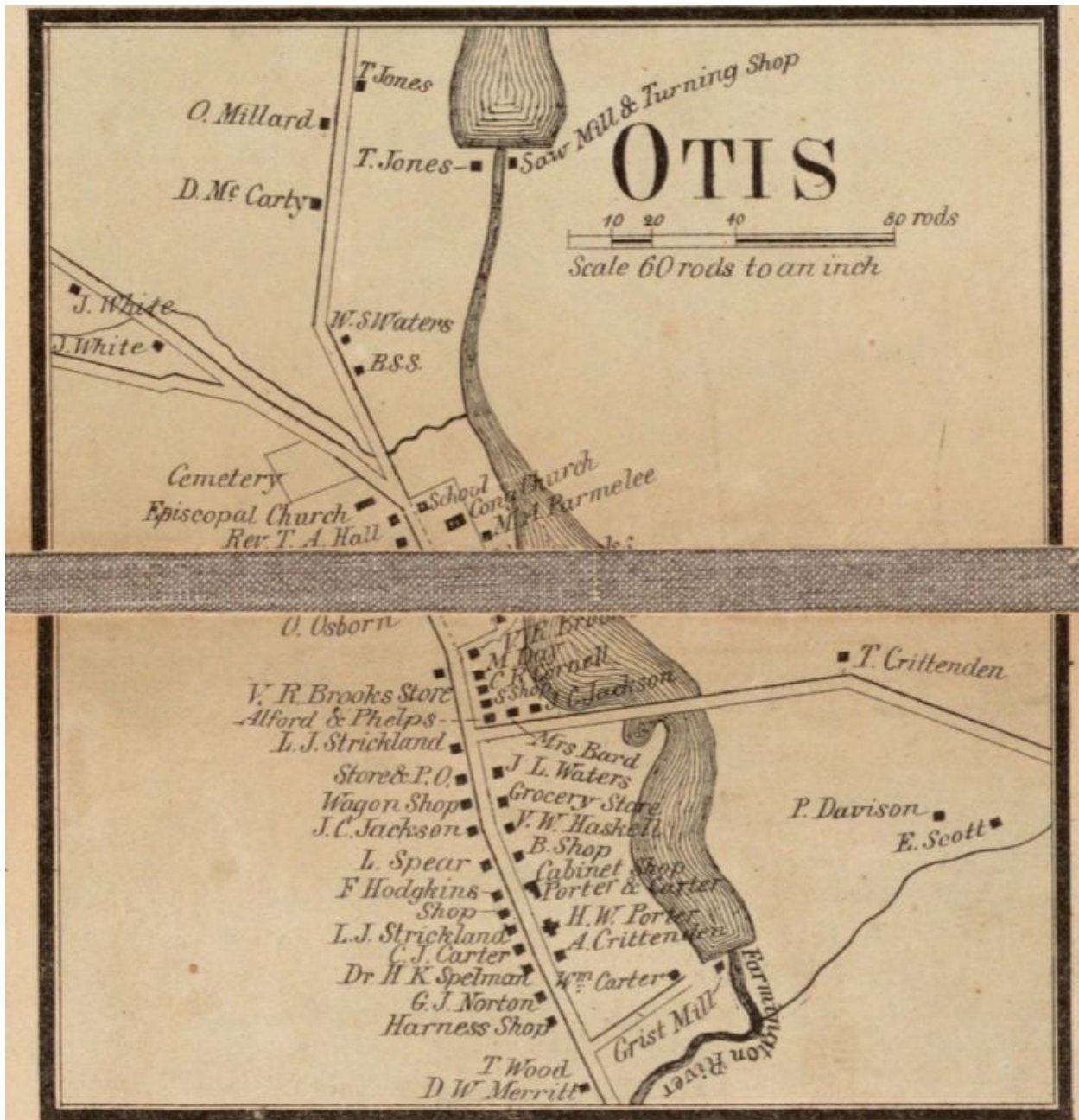


Figure 3. Henry F. Walling, Map of the County Berkshire Massachusetts, "Otis Center," 1858.

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

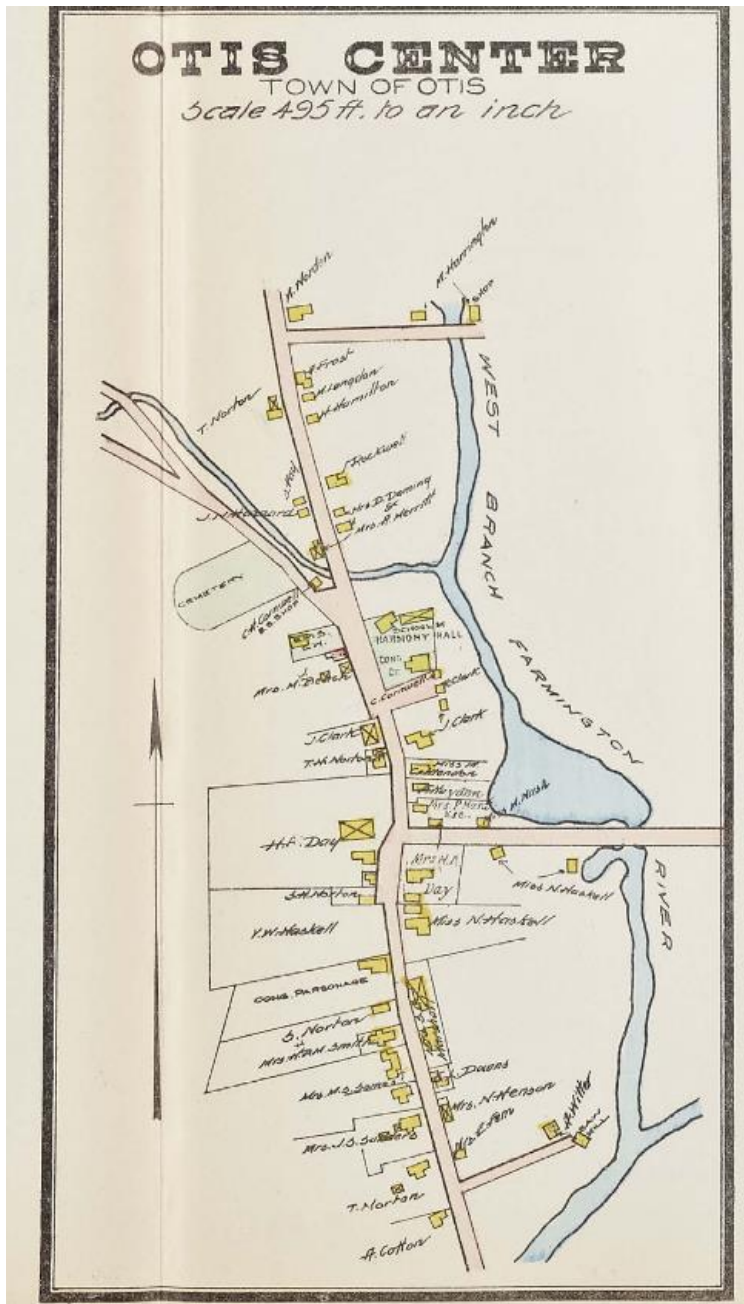


Figure 4. Barnes and Farnham, Atlas of Berkshire County, "Otis Center," 1904.

Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State

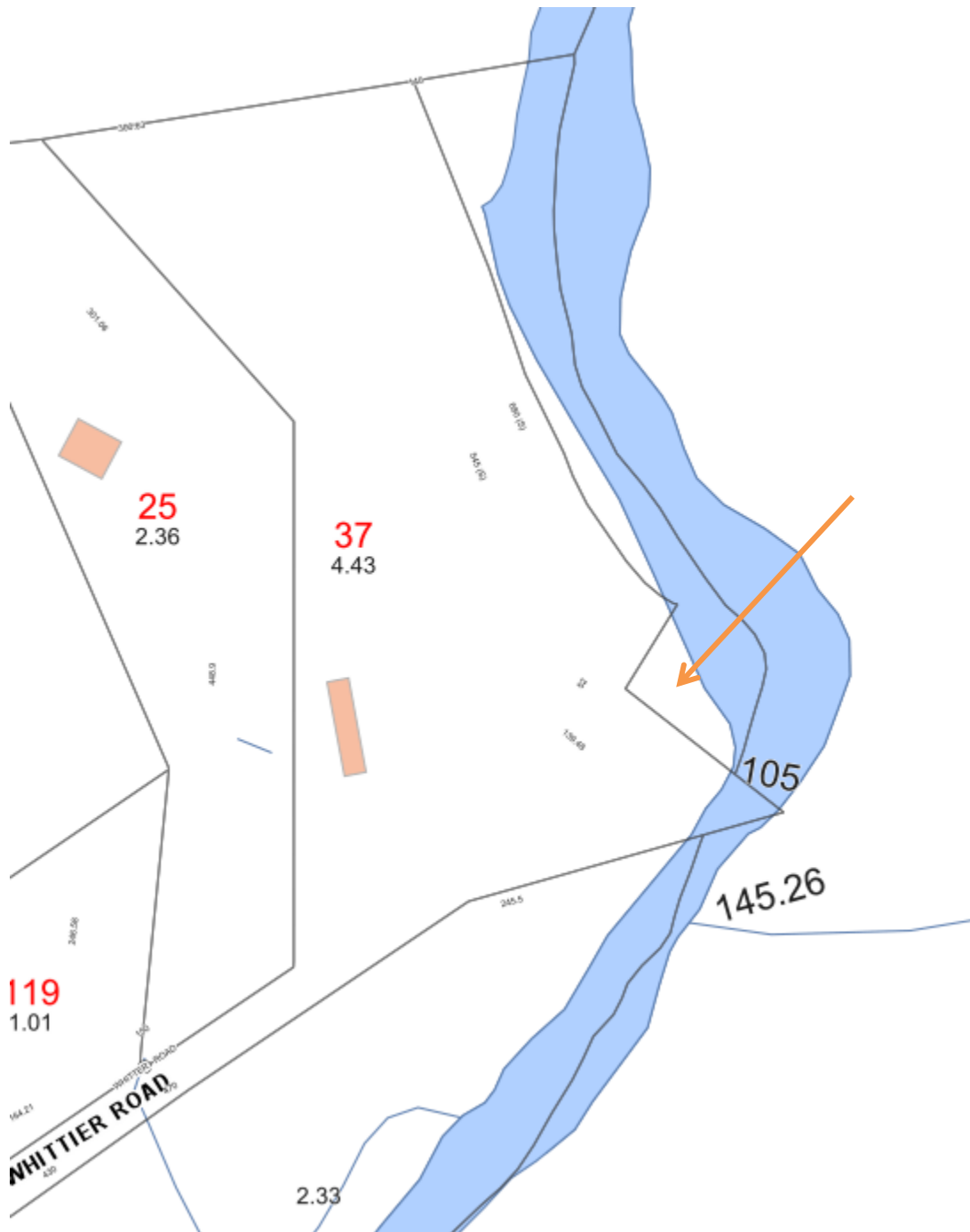
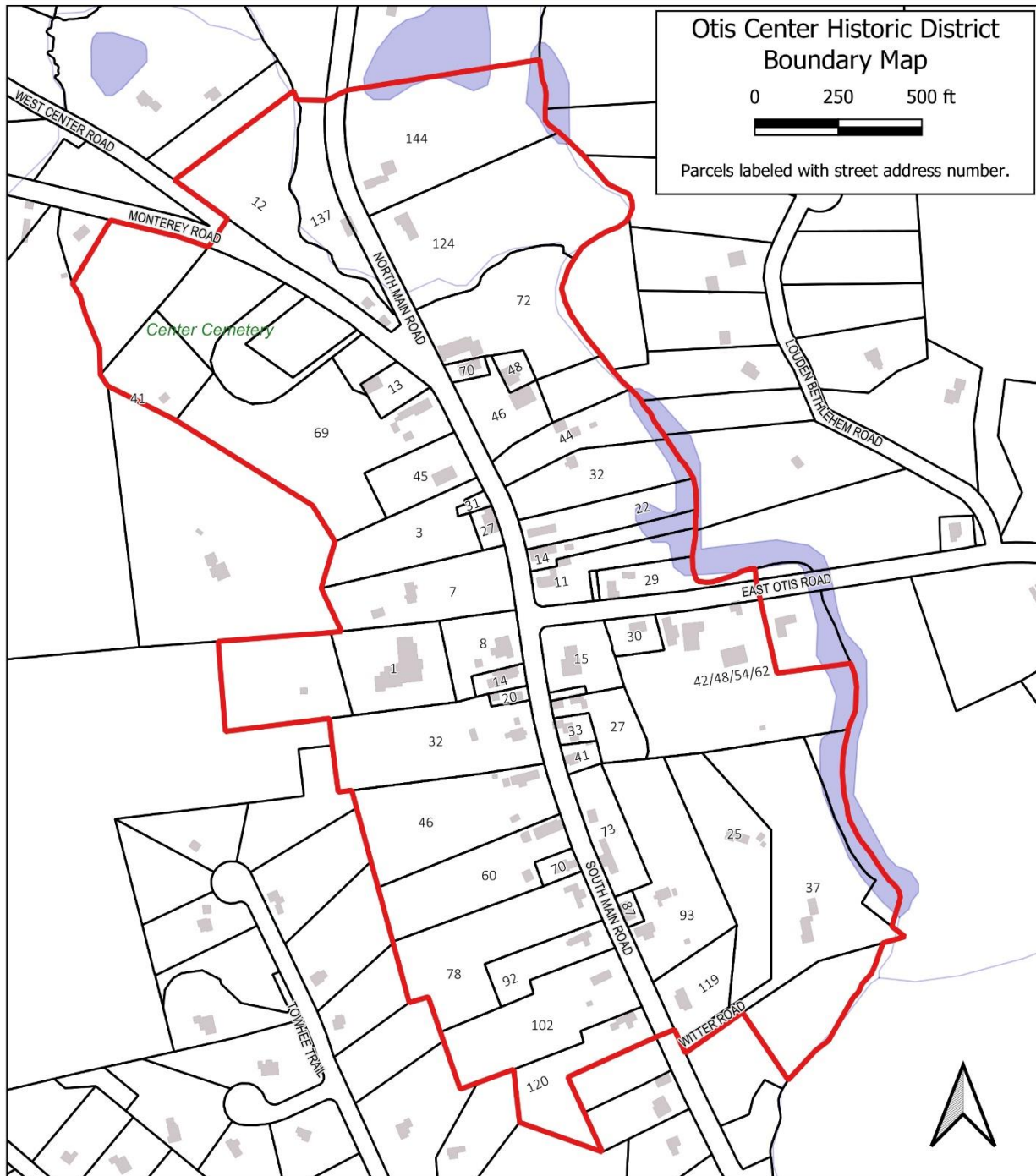


Figure 5. Assessor's map with addresses and dimensions. Arrow points to unnumbered lot in town ownership containing some of the sawmill site. #37 is 37 Witter Road. "Whittier Road" is a misspelling of "Witter Road".

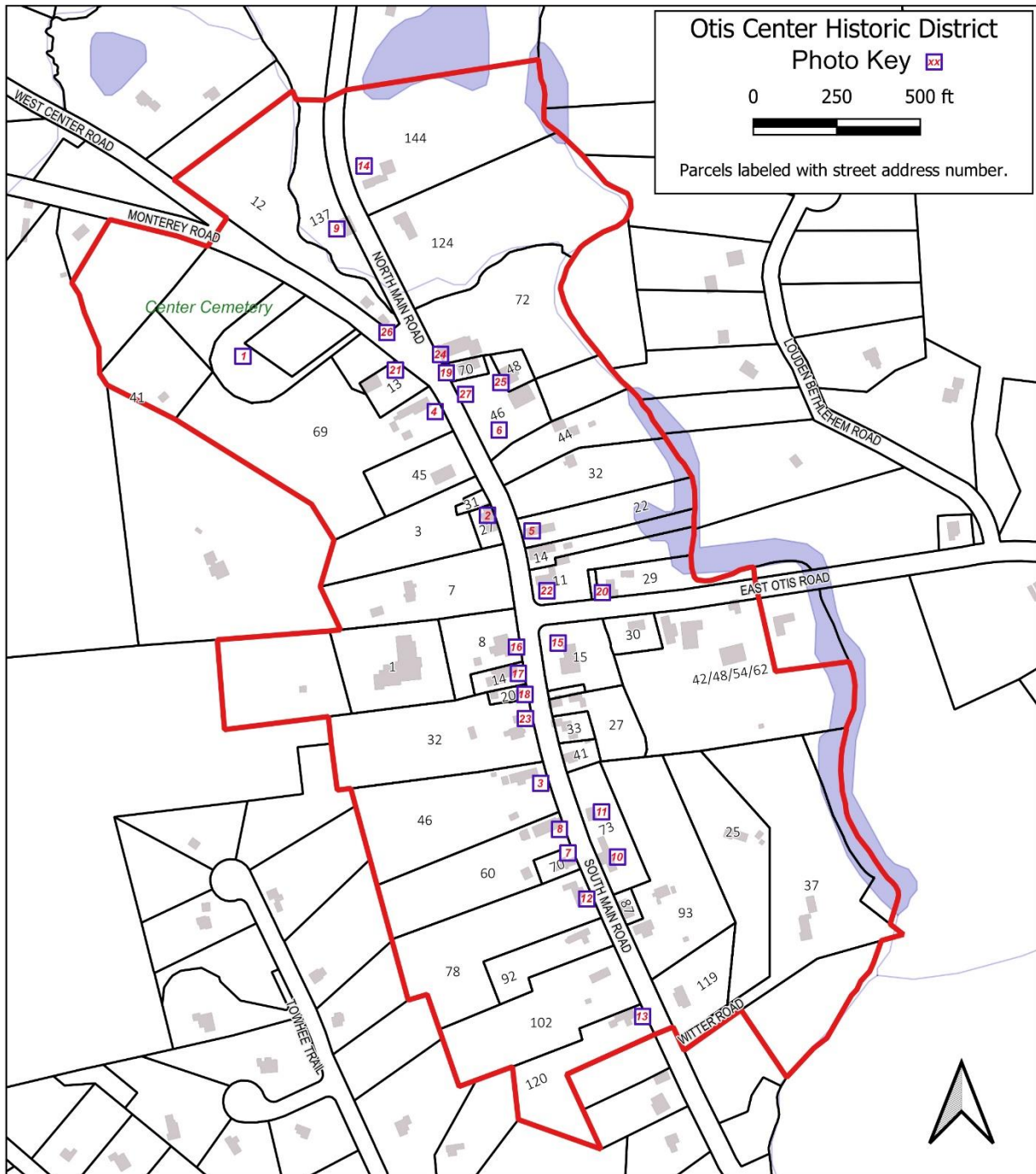
Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State



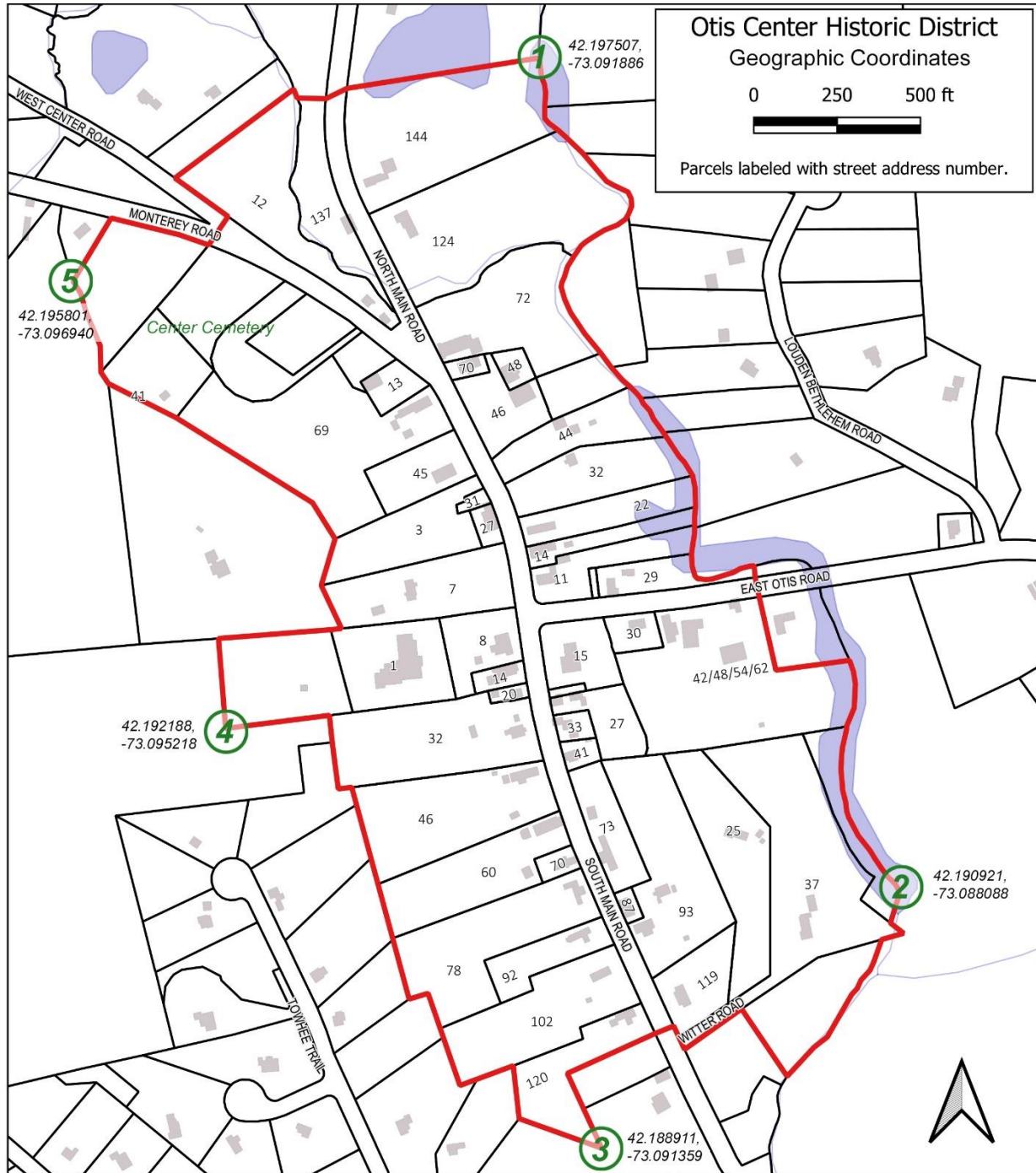
Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State



Otis Center Historic District
Name of Property

Berkshire, Massachusetts
County and State



Otis Center Historic District, Otis (Berkshire Co.), MA



1. Center Cemetery, view to northeast.



2. Squire Seymour Store, 27 North Main Road, view to west.

Otis Center Historic District, Otis (Berkshire Co.), MA



3. John & Lucinda Spear House 46 South Main Road, view west.



4. Lester and Corintha Filley House, 69 North Main Road, view to west.

Otis Center Historic District, Otis (Berkshire Co.), MA



5. Moses and Henrietta Day House, 22 North Main Road, view to northeast.



6. Otis First Congregational Church, 46 North Main Road, view to northeast.

Otis Center Historic District, Otis (Berkshire Co.), MA



7. L. J. Strickland House 70 South Main Road, view to northwest.



8. Calvin & Sylvia Barker House, 60 South Main Road, view to southeast.

Otis Center Historic District, Otis (Berkshire Co.), MA



9. Mrs. Almora Merritt's Barn, 137 North Main Road, view to south.



10. Henry and Lucinda Porter House, 73 South Main Road, view to southeast.

Otis Center Historic District, Otis (Berkshire Co.), MA



11. Porter and Carter Cabinet Shop, 73 South Main Road, view to southeast.



12. Charles and Amelia Carter House, 78 South Main Road, view to west.

Otis Center Historic District, Otis (Berkshire Co.), MA



13. Asenata and George Norton House, 120 South Main Road, view to northwest.



14. Levi and Lucinda Waters House, 144 North Main Road, view to northeast.

Otis Center Historic District, Otis (Berkshire Co.), MA



15. Jackson Wagon and Wheelwright Shop, 33 South Main Road, view to northwest.



16. Col. Samuel Pickett's Tavern and Day's Hotel, 8 South Main Road, view to west.

Otis Center Historic District, Otis (Berkshire Co.), MA



17. Pickett and Sears Store, 14 South Main Road, view to southwest.



18. Jonathan and Harriet Jackson House, 20 South Main Road, view to west.

Otis Center Historic District, Otis (Berkshire Co.), MA



19. Harmony Hall 70 North Main Road, view to northwest.



20. Lucy Hunt House, 29 East Otis Road, view to north.

Otis Center Historic District, Otis (Berkshire Co.), MA



21. St. Paul's Episcopal Church, view to southwest.



22. Helena Hall, 11 East Otis Road, view to northwest.

Otis Center Historic District, Otis (Berkshire Co.), MA



23. Congregational Parsonage, 32 South Main Road, view to southwest.



24. Fireman's Hall, 72 North Main Road, view to northeast.

Otis Center Historic District, Otis (Berkshire Co.), MA



25. Otis Library and Museum, 48 North Main Road, view to east.



26. Cornwell Blacksmith Shop, 12 Monterey Road, view to north.

Otis Center Historic District, Otis (Berkshire Co.), MA



27. Otis Town Green and War Memorial, North Main Road, view to southeast.