

Northampton Historic Landmark Commission

Application for Listing in the
Designated Landmarks Register
of the
Town of Northampton

Beecher House

September, 2004

Submitted by:

Richard Tymchyn, Jr.
105 County Highway 109
Broadalbin, New York 12025
(518) 883-5228



HISTORIC RESOURCE INVENTORY FORM

Town of Northampton Historic Landmark Commission

IDENTIFICATION

Property name (if any) The Beecher House
Address or Street Location 105 County Highway 109
County Fulton Town/City Northampton Village/Hamlet: Community of Fish House
Owner Richard Tymchyn Address 105 County Highway 109, Broadalbin, NY 12025
Original use Residence Current use Residence
Architect/Builder, if known Unknown Date of construction, if known 1860's

DESCRIPTION

Materials -- please check those materials that are visible

Exterior Walls:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> wood clapboard	wood shingle	vertical boards	plywood
	stone	brick	poured concrete	concrete block
	vinyl siding	aluminum siding	cement-asbestos	other: <u>masonite (to be removed)</u>
Roof:	asphalt, shingle	asphalt, roll	wood shingle	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> metal slate
Foundation:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> stone	brick	poured concrete	concrete block

Other materials and their location: _____

Alterations, if known: French Atrium doors, front and rear Date: 2004

Condition: excellent good fair deteriorated

Front porch removed, date unknown. Updated electricity and plumbing

Photos

Front photo: Front and side of house from southwest corner.

Old photo, 1890, (from Clarkson, An Adirondack Archive): west-southwest view.

Supplemental present-day photos (two per page):

1. Two southeast views.
2. Rear (south-southeast,) and rear of right side of house.
3. Northwest corner, and wider setting of front.

Maps

Supplemental maps

1. 2004 Tax Map
2. 1970 USGS Map
3. 1924 Map
4. 1890-1900 Sketch map
5. 1860 map
6. Survey description from 2003 mortgage

Prepared by: Richard Tymchyn address 105 County Highway 109, Broadalbin, NY 12025 [Northampton]

Telephone: (518) 883-5228 email _____ Date September 13, 2004

The Beecher House

[Unless otherwise noted, page number references are to Clarkson, An Adirondack Archive: The Trail to Windover.]

Narrative Description of Property:

The Beecher House is located in the heart of Fish House on the east side of County Highway 109, the second house from the corner. The porch was removed, date unknown. The exterior is deteriorated. Masonite siding was put on approximately 20 years ago. There are no exterior buildings. A woodshed is attached to the rear of the house. An atrium door was installed in front to replace a picture window that was installed in the 1960's.

Nan Clarkson describes their family's home, as it looked in 1890 (An Adirondack Archive, p. 72):

"Its rambling, gabled style would perhaps be classified now as Farmhouse Gothic, and its whole aspect inviting. Cream colored, trimmed with dark-green louvered shutters, it was shaded by a large Elm, a bountifully-spread umbrella tree and a vine that made a regular bower of the long front porch. Looking out on a clear day from this cool vantage point, one's eye would be carried down the village and the valley to the Mayfield mountains just beyond, a sure reminder that the village of Fish House was in the foothills of the mighty Adirondacks...a large living room with long windows . . . that gave intimate views of pastoral village surroundings." (p. 89 also interesting)

The Sacandaga Reservoir, completed in 1930, forever changed the village of Fish House. Nan Clarkson writes of a trip with her Father in the 1980's to visit the old family homestead:

"I remember being almost glad, then, for his partial blindness, which seemed to conceal the sight of this family icon in its misery, walls sagging, porch removed, set in a long-neglected mass of weeds." (p. 97)

In October 1990, she again traveled to Fish House to see what had become of the once stately home:

"I was prepared to see the Beecher Home no longer standing. [It had been partially repaired with the roof intact.] But . . . missing the porches and vines and trees that had given it such grace and old-fashion upstate character . . . Nothing at all to elicit nostalgia for our Fish House -- the old homestead where my grandparents were married, and my own parents had spent their honeymoon." [But intact.] (p. 97)

Narrative Description of Significance:Context within American History and the Local Community

By the 1860's, after the Beecher house had been built, America had had two hundred years of its own history. This history ran from the Puritan and Dutch colonial days, through struggles with the French, the founding of a new government with the Revolutionary War and War of 1812, and expansion to the Pacific Ocean when California was annexed from Mexico in 1848. The Erie Canal linked the East to the Midwest. Thirty-thousand miles of railroad tracks had been laid. American literature was being read abroad: Washington Irving's "Knickerbocker's History" and James Fenimore Cooper's "The Leather-Stocking Tales" were followed by a renaissance of New England romanticists: Emerson, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Melville, Whittier, Longfellow, Lowell, Holmes. Then came the Civil War, and in its aftermath, a new realism, though tempered by optimism.

The Beechers' life in Fish House reflects the bloom of America's Victorian Era. Life in a country home, surrounded by the beauty of nature, was the primary subject of American writers. Between 1870 and 1930 the rural population fell from over 80% to less than 40% of the total. So visits to a "family homestead" in a country setting were desirable.

The Beecher House is an important structure that recalls the "genteel comeliness of the Victorian village" which comprised the Fish House of the 1890s, and later, provided Nan Clarkson with fond memories of summers in "rural harmony." She remembers:

"In our visits to Fish House each summer we children would hear about the great Sir William Johnson and the fishing lodge he built there long ago, which gave Fish House its name . . . In images furnished by Father's reading out loud to us from "The Last of the Mohicans," I would imagine Sir William's birch bark canoe, [Mohawk] braves at helm and stern, gliding noiselessly through the rushes and cattails of the Vlaie Creek marshes: red-winged blackbirds skimming the water and trout so abundant they would be jumping to Sir William's line. We were told that coming to Fish House was his favorite escape from the burden of responsibilities as Commissioner of Indian Affairs in His Majesty's Colonies. We felt the thrill of patriotic pride to know that our ancestor, Godfrey Shew, had fought with Sir William, then Colonel Johnson, at Ticonderoga in The French and Indian War." (p. 25)

"Fish House, at the turn of the century, and up until the time when the coming of the Sacandaga Reservoir changed it completely, was much like our romanticized version of a typical rural American village. Its five country roads radiated from the village green, and each was an elm-shaded bower, as Grandfather [William H. Hudnut] put it, 'leading to a land of the heart's delight.' The Sacandaga River, close by, as it had in the days when Sir William Johnson's . . . canoe would glide along its winding miles. . . . It was a different world now from the marshy and untenanted Garden of Eden beloved of Sir William Johnson and tamed by [early settlers]. It was a Victorian world, with its own gentle way of life." Ladies enjoying ice-cold lemonades from shaded porches; young people playing tennis on the parsonage lawn; men casting for rainbow trout in the Vlaie Creek; small boys listening to tales of the Mohawks and digging for arrowheads in mounds along the Sacandaga." (p.82)

The desire of the current owner, Richard Tymchyn, to restore the home's exterior, with the romantic front porch of the Victorian Era, reflects the current residents' "respect for a significant past" as well as their determination to preserve tangible (objects) which testify to the continuing history of Fish House.

Threads of the Beecher Family in the Tapestry of American History

William Wessels, author of Adirondack Profiles, said of the Hudnut/Beecher family that "the Hudnuts have made a great contribution to American life" and "are truly lovers of the Adirondack country."

Mr. Abram Beecher (grandparent of James Beecher) was a direct descendent from Godfrey Shew, the first settler of Fish House (p. 23). Hannah Putman married Jacob Shew after the Revolutionary war. Their daughter Katherine married a Beecher. Katherine was Elisabeth Beecher Hudnut Clarkson's great, great, great grandmother. (Chapter 5)
James Beecher was related to Harriet Beecher Stowe. His cousin was Henry Ward Beecher, abolitionist. (p. 55)

In February, 1860, when Abraham Lincoln arrived in New York in response to Henry Ward Beecher's invitation to speak at his church in Brooklyn, Lincoln found that arrangements had been made to change the location of his speech to the Cooper Institute in Manhattan. After attending Beecher's church on Sunday, Lincoln was photographed in Mathew Brady's studio on Monday, and later that day gave his famous Cooper Union address. Later Lincoln was to say, "Brady and the Cooper Institute made me President." (Ralph Newman, ed., Lincoln for the Ages, 1960, p. 139.)

Also, the Beechers were close cousins of Lucy Marvin Sinclair. (Note: Sinclair Point was named after this family.) She was the daughter of Dr. Langdon Marvin (p. 29), whose mother was a Beecher.

Other facts related to the Beecher House:

House was built c.1860s by the Baker sisters (p. 72). In the spring of 1890, Ella Katherine and Hannah Emily ("Nan") Beecher bought the home from Miss Cora Baker for their mother and father, Elizabeth Ann Northrup and James Fuller Beecher (p.71). Ella (p. 24) the eldest sister traveled to Europe with the family of Samuel Langhorne Clemens (Mark Twain). She was a close girlhood friend of Mrs. Clemens, the former Olivia Langdon of Elmira. (James and Elizabeth Beecher moved into the house in 1890. His daughter's wedding (Harriet Shew Beecher married William Hudnut) was held in this home in that year. (p. 53 & 71-81)

- 1st Sergeant, A. Burr Beecher, Northampton, Officer in Company D, 93rd Regiment Infantry from Fulton County in the Civil War. On the 1868 Post Office addresses for the residents of Northampton, Abram B. Beecher and David H. Beecher are listed as living with Chauncey P. Beecher. Their occupation was farming. [Source: Fonda records]

Abraham Beecher (married Lydia Day Fuller) was a Deacon at the red brick Presbyterian church. Abram and Lydia were married in Connecticut and moved to Fish House after the Revolutionary war. James Fuller Beecher, Abram's grandson, moved from Elmira, New York to Fish House around 1879 with his wife, Elizabeth Ann Northrup and their three daughters. For the first year or so, Cousin Lucy Sinclair gave them use of the Marvin house (said to be built on the site of Sir William Johnson's fish house). (p. 56)

William Hudnut graduated from Princeton College in 1886. He began study at Princeton Seminary, but transferred to and graduated from Union Seminary in New York City. The summer of 1890, he went as a young seminary intern to Fish House Presbyterian church. That summer he fell in love with and married James' daughter, Harriet Shew Beecher (Elizabeth Clarkson's Grandmother). Following this internship, the newly married couple moved on to serve a church in Port Jervis, NY.

Bibliographical References

- Child, "Gazetteer and Directory of Fulton and Montgomery Counties," 1869-70.
- Clarkson, Elisabeth Hudnut, An Adirondack Archive: The Trail to Windover, North Country Books, Inc., Utica, New York 1993.
- Hart, Larry, The Sacandaga Story: A Valley of Yesteryear, 1967.
- Shaw, K. B., Northampton, Then and Now. A Pictorial History, Northville-Northampton Historical Society, Broadalbin, New York, 1975.
- Russell, Charlotte D., Northampton, Times Past, and Times Present, 1976.
- Sleezer, Katherine, Fish House Through the Years.
- Wessel, William, "Adirondack Profiles," paperback from Adirondack Museum [about Richard Hudnut based on interviews with his brother (E. Clarkson's grandfather), William H. Hudnut.]

Rehabilitation Plan:

The exterior will be restored as close to the original as possible. First, insulation is needed. The masonite siding now on the house must be torn off. New insulation will be installed. The siding will be clapboard. Sixteen windows need to be replaced. I will use new windows with the look and style in the photograph from 1890. The shutters will be replaced. An original-looking front porch extending the full length of the front of the house will be added, based on the 1890 photograph. The house will be cream color with green shutters and trim, as stated in E. Clarkson's An Adirondack Archive. To preserve the tin roof, a coat of paint may be added.

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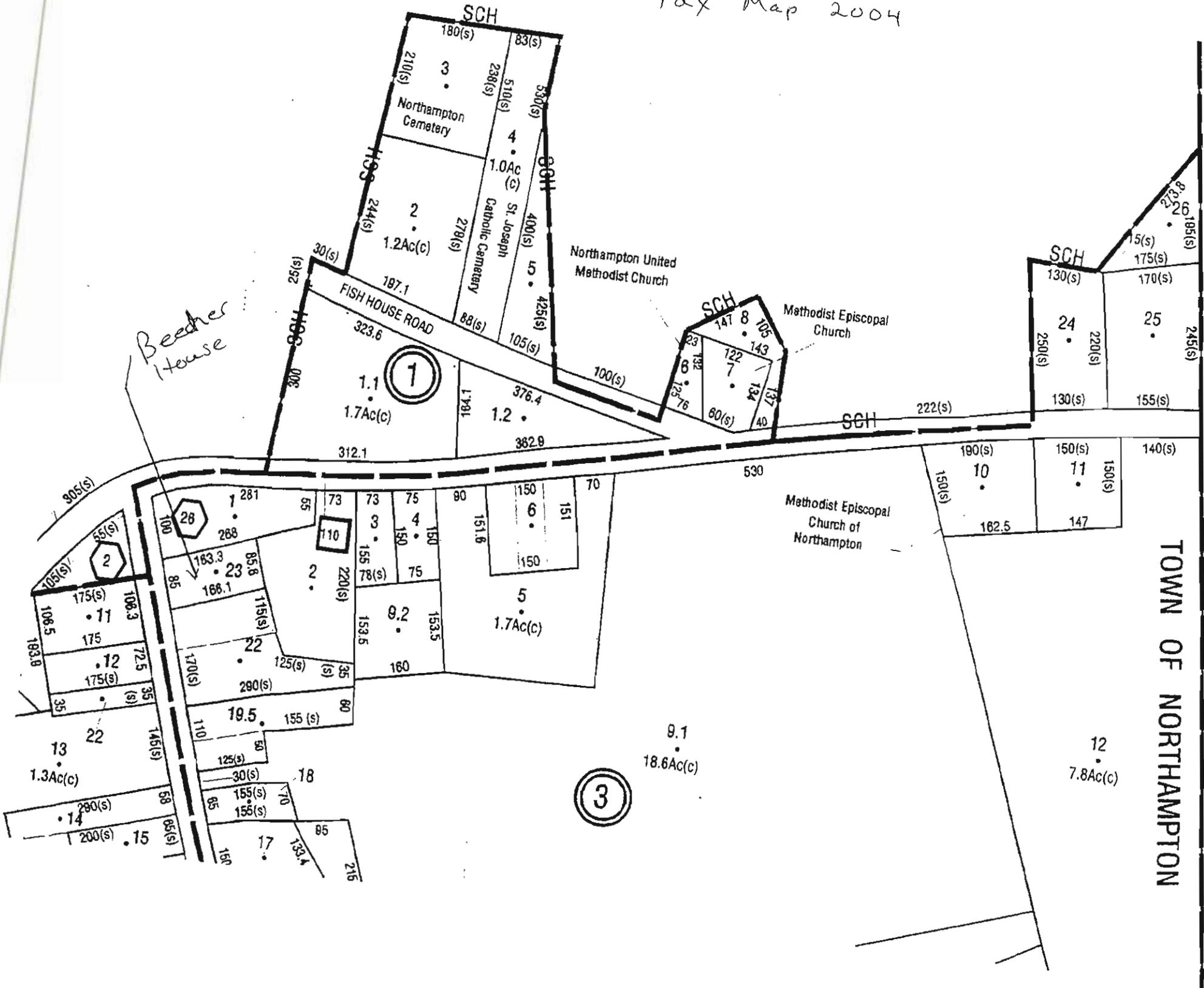
Fish House, the Beecher house c. 1890

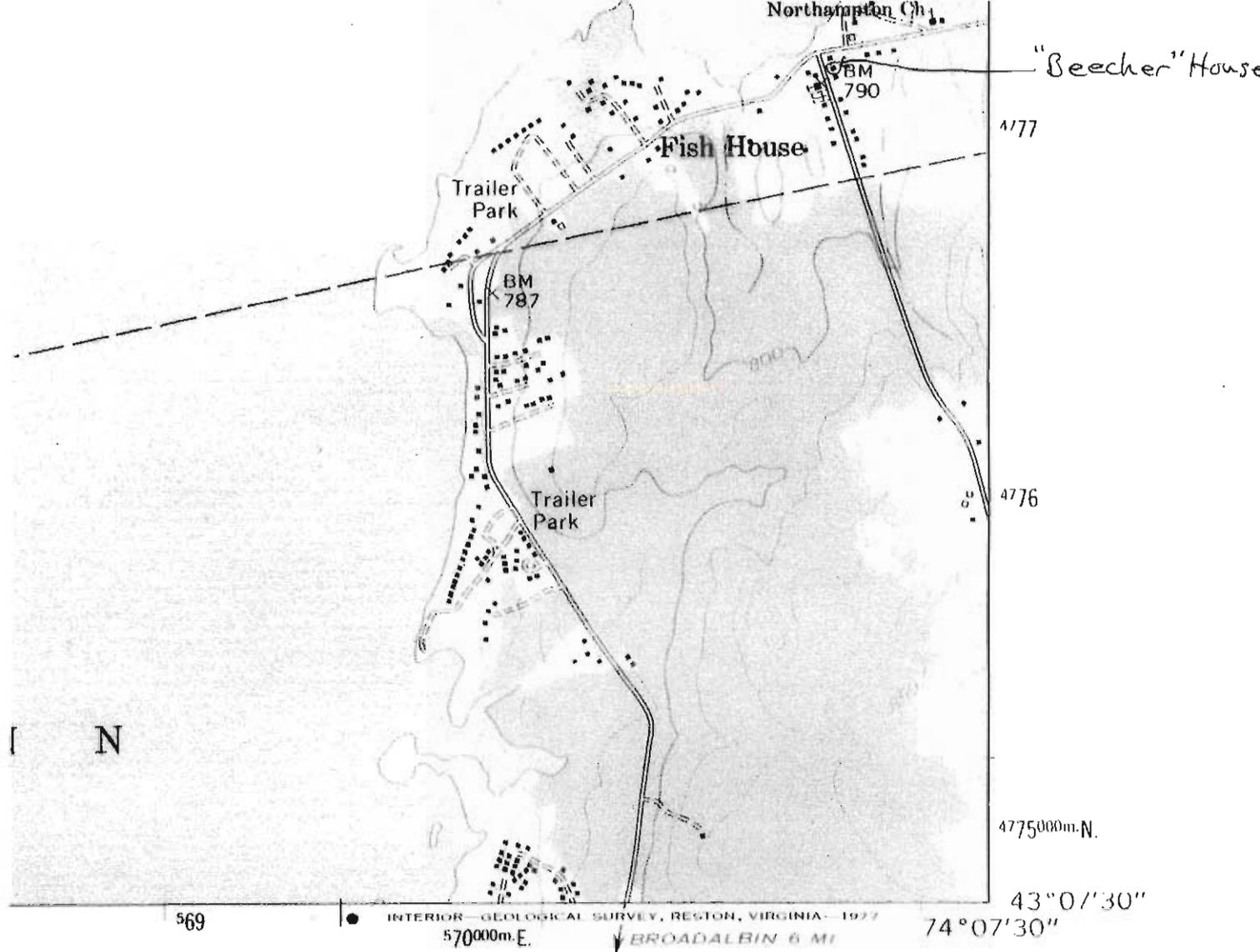


Fish

ICT

Tax Map 2004





INTERIOR GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, REGION, VIRGINIA - 1977

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Primary highway, hard surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Unimproved road
- Interstate Route
- U. S. Route
- State Route

(GALWAY)
6170 II SE

NORTHVILLE, N.Y.

N4307.5—W7407.5/7.5

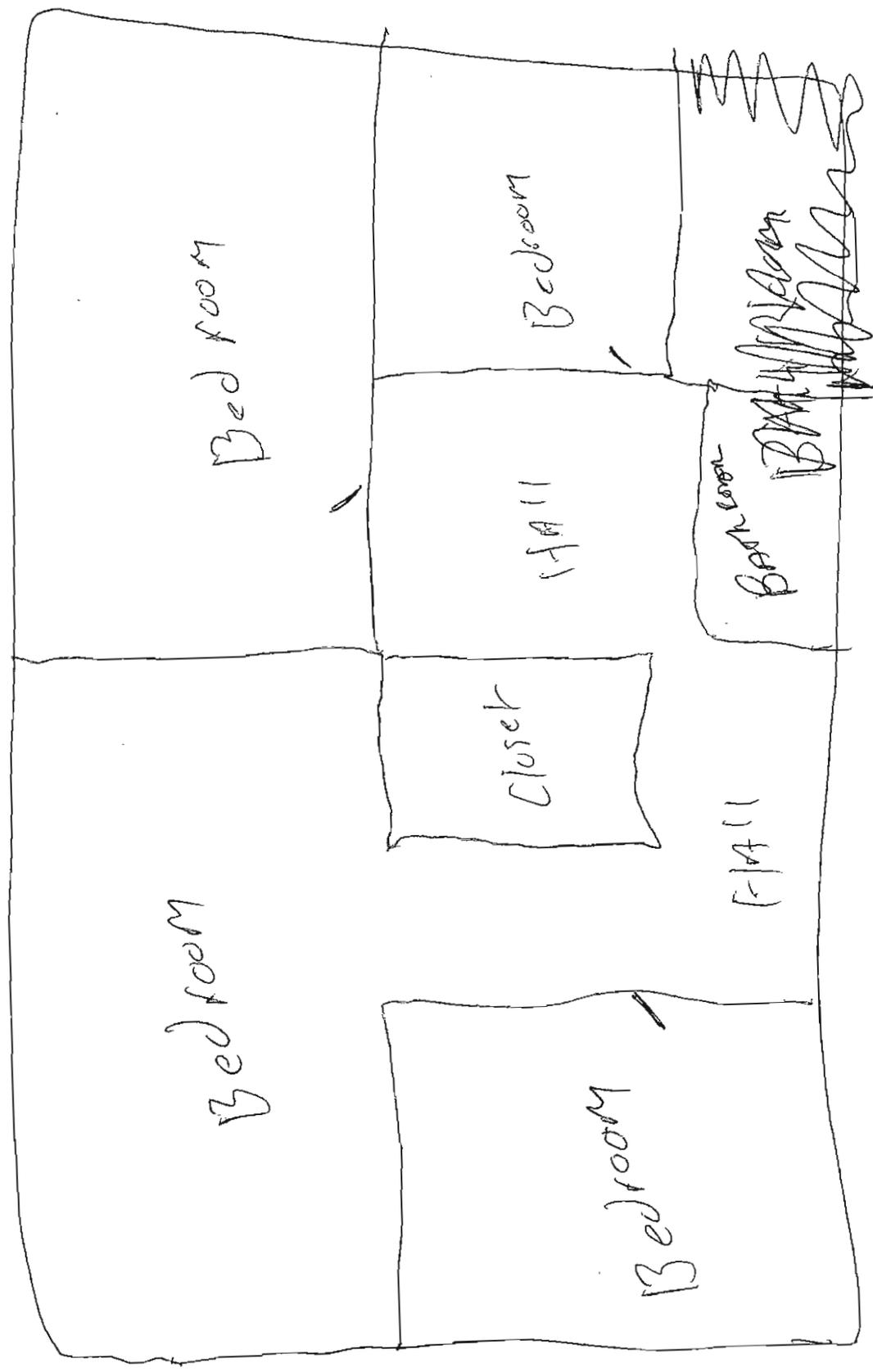
1970

AMS 6170 II NW SERIES V821

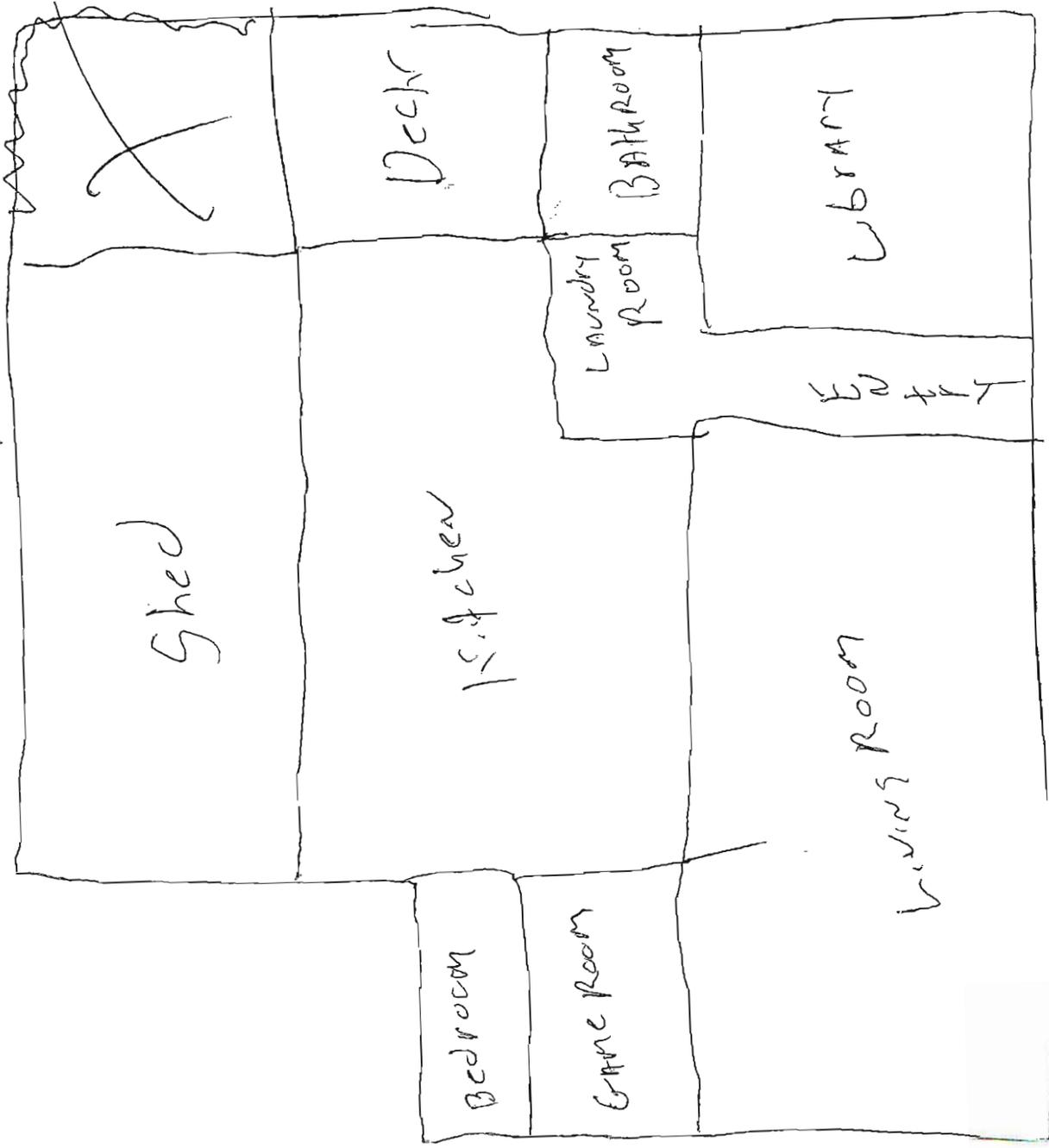
ATION

U ps + A. r s

Beecher House



Down stairs



Beecher House

Supplemental Materials

Present-day photos (two per page):

1. Two southeast views.
2. Rear (south-southeast,) and rear of right side of house.
3. Northwest corner, and wider setting of front.

Maps:

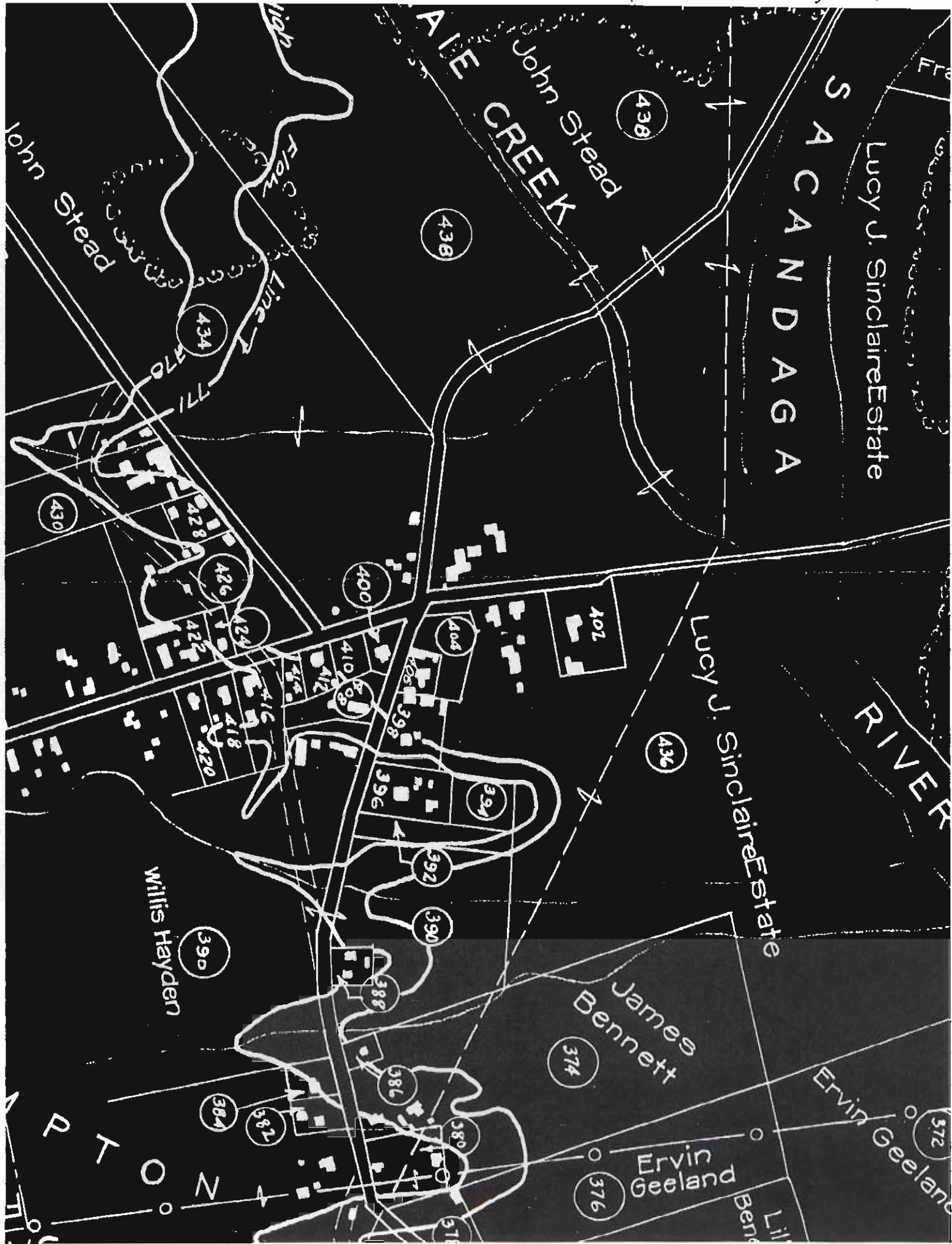
1. 1924 Map
2. 1890-1900 Sketch map
3. 1860 map
4. Survey description from 2003 mortgage

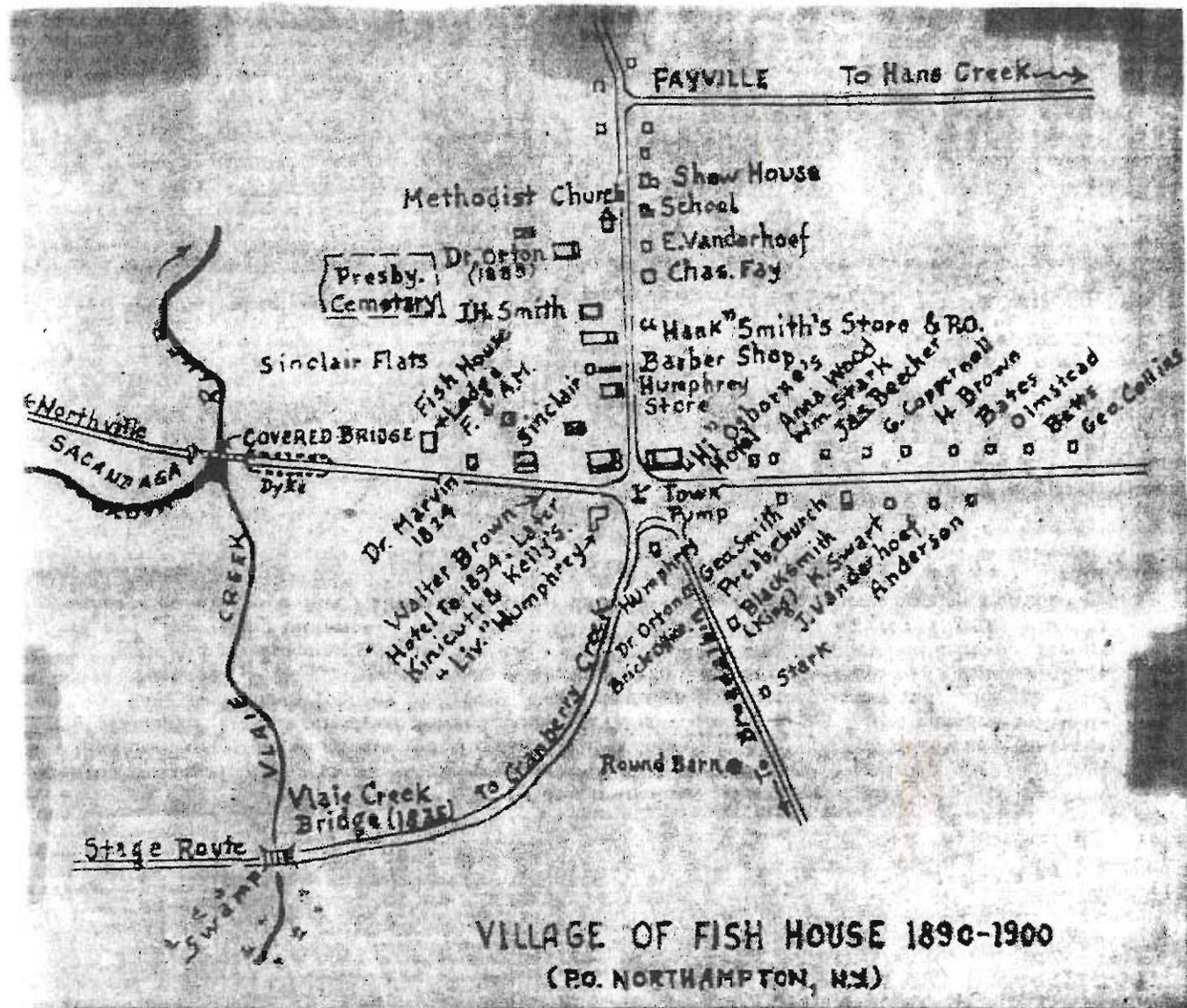




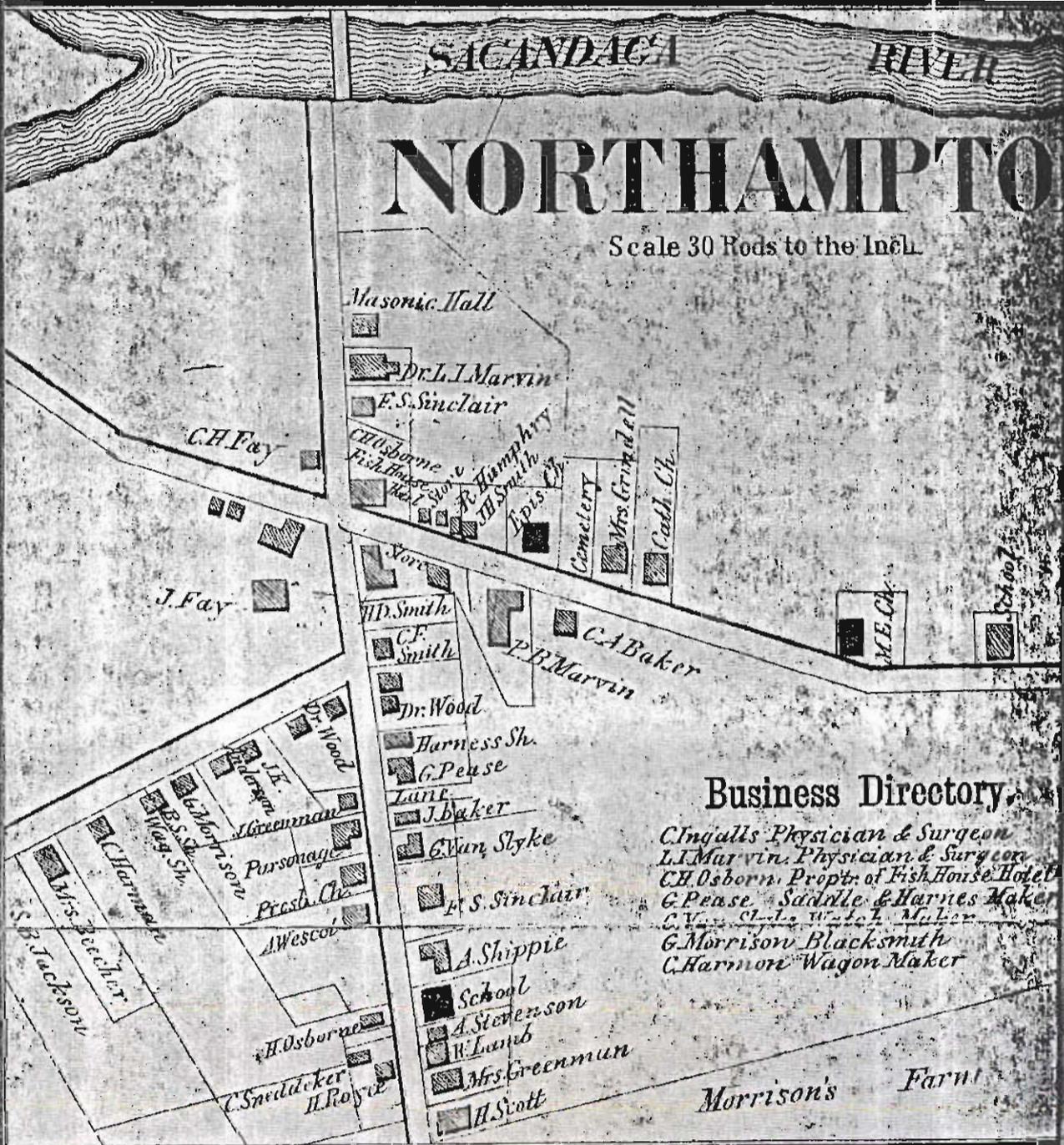


Sacandaga Reservoir Preliminary Plans, 1924 - Drawing #17

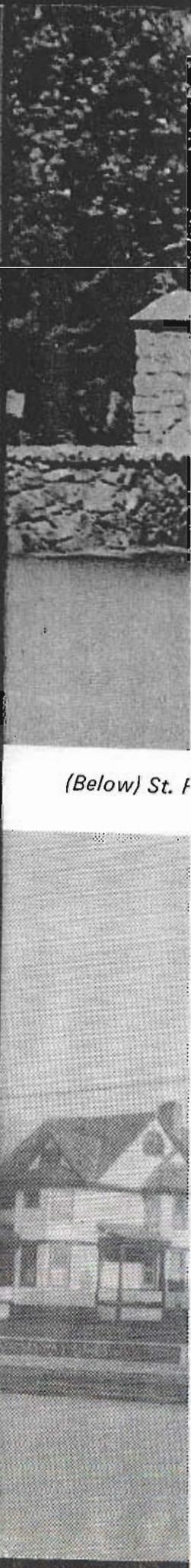




IN THE EARLY DAYS, Sacandaga River, with its deep pools, was a noted fishing ground for bass, pike and pickerel. Fishermen followed its meandering course along steep clay banks and sand shoals. The two hotels in Fish House were well patronized by sportsmen. Summer boarders were numerous. The Sinclair family maintained a permanent home and their herd of prize Jersey cattle grazed peacefully on the Sinclair Flats. In a raid in 1778, the Tories and British took Godfrey Shew and three sons prisoners. Shew's cabin burned. After release from Quebec, the Shews built house on present site in 1784. In a feud by hotel owners Walter Brown and "Hi" Osborne, the latter was murdered in January, 1894. The Osborne Hotel burned in 1895. At the point marked by an arrow at the left center, a small garrison was maintained by militia during the Revolution. It was destroyed by the British in 1781.



Fish House as it looked about 1860.



(Below) St. F

Business Directory

- C. Ingalls Physician & Surgeon
- L. I. Marvin, Physician & Surgeon
- C. H. Osborn, Propr. of Fish House Hotel
- G. Pease, Saddle & Harness Maker
- C. Van Slyke, Watch Maker
- G. Morrison, Blacksmith
- C. Harmon, Wagon Maker

Morrison's Farm

Beecher House / Tymchyn
Mortgage
2003

SCHEDULE "A"

All that certain lot, piece or parcel of land situate in the Village of Fish House in the County of Fulton and State of New York and known as the Baker House and lot bounded and described as follows:

On the North by the brick house lot now or late in possession of William M. Stark; on the East by lands now or late of Ezra Vanderhoof; on the South by lands now or late of Mrs. David Gibbs; and on the West by the Northampton Patent Line; in the center of the highway leading from Fish House to Galway. Containing one-half acre of land be the same more or less. Being the same premises conveyed by Ellsabeth Beecher to Hannah Emily Beecher by Warranty Deed dated March 13, 1899 and recorded in the Fulton County Clerk's Office on March 21, 1899 in Liber 104 of Deeds at Page 118.

Excepting and reserving from the above described lands all that tract or parcel of land situate in the Village of Fish House, Town of Northampton, County of Fulton and State of New York, bounded and described as follows:

Beginning at a point in the northerly line of the premises now owned by H. Emily Beecher, it being the dividing line between the premises of H. Emily Beecher and Emilly L. Stark and distant 187-1/2 feet easterly from the center of the highway leading from Fish House to Galway, and running thence in an easterly direction along said dividing line between said premises about 172 feet to the premises of one Stead; thence along the dividing line between the premises of H. Emily Beecher and said Stead in a southerly direction about 87 feet; thence along the dividing line between premises of H. Emily Beecher and Coopernall in a westerly direction about 156 feet; thence across the premises of said H. Emily Beecher in a northerly direction in a straight line about 87 feet to the point or place of beginning. It being the intention hereby to convey a plot of ground (about 87 feet wide and about 172 feet along on the northerly side and about 156 feet on the southerly side) off from the easterly end of the premises described in deed Elisabeth Beecher to Hannah Emily Beecher dated March 13, 1899 and recorded in Fulton County Clerk's Office in Book 104 of Deeds at Page 118.

The above described premises are more currently described by a survey, dated September 30, 1987 made by John W. Ferguson, P.L.S., as follows:

All that certain lot, piece or parcel of land, situate in the Town of Northampton, County of Fulton, State of New York and described as follows:

Beginning at a found iron pipe on the easterly line of County Road No. 109 where said easterly line is intersected by the common boundary line of the lands of Dube, herein described, on the south, and the lands of Detweiler, on the north, said iron pipe further described as being 99.9 feet distance southerly along the easterly road line aforesaid from the intersection of the easterly line of County Road No. 109, with the southerly line of County Road No. 110, and running thence from the place of beginning N. 73 deg. 44 min. 20 sec. E. and along the Dube-Detweiler common boundary line a distance of 164.32 feet to a found iron pipe; thence S. 17 deg. 36 min. 00 sec. E. and running along a wire fence at the common boundary line of the lands of Dube, on the west, and the lands of Byster, on the east, a distance of 85.60 feet to a set iron pin; thence S. 73 deg. 56 min. 20 sec. W. and running along the common boundary line of the lands of Dube, on the north, and the lands of Ovitt, on the south, a distance of 166.01 feet to a set iron pin; thence N. 16 deg. 28 min. 20 sec. W. and running along the aforesaid easterly line of County Road No. 109 a distance of 85.00 feet to the place of beginning.