

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

EXP. 10/31/84

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date entered

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic THE ROCKLAND ALMSHOUSE (preferred)

and/or common The Almshouse

2. Location

street & number 198 Spring Street N/A not for publication

city, town Rockland N/A vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Massachusetts code 025 county Plymouth code 023

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: recreation
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation

4. Owner of Property

name Town of Rockland

street & number 242 Union Street

city, town Rockland N/A vicinity of state MA 02370

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Plymouth County Registry of Deeds

street & number Court Street

city, town Plymouth state MA

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Inventory of the Historic Assets
title of the Commonwealth, #1 has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Massachusetts Historical Commission

city, town Boston state MA

7. Description Rockland Almshouse, 198 Spring St., Rockland, MA

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	(by <u>an addition,</u> <u>1899</u>)		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Almshouse property encompasses its original 6 acre lot and includes The Almshouse as well as four ancillary structures: a barn, "tramp house" and two chicken coops. The open expanse of land is bounded on the east by French's Stream and undeveloped woodland, on the north and south by private abutters and on the west by Spring Street. Topographically, the area is characterized by a mixture of wetlands and higher dry areas. Historically, land use has been primarily agricultural including vegetable gardening, cow grazing, and poultry and livestock raising; at present it contains the Community Garden Plots of the Rockland Garden Club and two playing fields. The Almshouse buildings are currently not in use.

Functional in conception and design, the Almshouse is an L-plan building exhibiting the distinctive characteristics of vernacular, transitional Greek Revival/Italianate design: broad proportions, regular fenestration and spare decoration. Originally, the structure was built as a rectangular 2½ story almshouse with clapboard exterior, gable roof and side (flank) entrance. This portion remains virtually intact today. A major and similar infirmary addition was appended to the southeast corner in 1899, completing the present form. The following description discusses the building as a single unit.

The Almshouse rises 2½ stories from a full basement. The foundation is original: brick above grade painted red, and rubblestone below. Wall construction is wood frame, sheathed in clapboards and trimmed with narrow corner boards. The gable roof(s) with returns at the end, which cap the building are currently covered by asphalt shingles; wooden gutters and metal downspouts allow water runoff. The original, now non-functioning, central brick chimney of the 1876 section remains; an additional exterior brick chimney, centrally located on the north elevation serves the furnace.

The south elevation of the 1876 section presents the most formal appearance. The original 1-story entrance porch with turned posts and railing and decorative sawn brackets runs the length of the symmetrical 5-bay facade. The primary central entry retains its 6-panel double doors with 2 light transom above; a secondary entry accesses into the 1899 ell at the east end of the porch. Abutting this main facade, the west elevation of the 1899 ell is likewise 5-bays wide, although less symmetrical. Gable ends (west and south) are also similar: 3 bays wide with paired windows in the gable fields; central fire doors and fire escapes on the second story. The south gable end of the 1899 ell contains an additional fire door at the first story level. A comparable balance between academic symmetry and functional irregularity characterizes both the north and east elevations. Windows throughout are 6/6 double hung sash and surmounted by simple shouldered architraves, the majority on the second story retain wooden shutters.

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

Rockland Almshouse

Continuation sheet 198 Spring St. Rockland Item number 7

Page 1

For NPS use only

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The interior plan is designed to accommodate communal living. The full basement contains a food storage room, laundry area and fireproofed furnace room. On the first floor, six rooms were reserved as a private apartment for the caretakers. Remaining space includes a large dining hall with pressed tin ceiling, office lounge, lavatory, lavatory and bath, dormitory, stairhall and five single bedrooms. The second floor is comprised of twenty-four single bedrooms, one tubroom, one room with three toilets and two sinks, one full bathroom, two storage rooms, and a central corridor. Flooring on both the first and second floors is linoleum-covered wood. The attic consists of three open spaces. Additional notable interior features include five staircases, the primary of which exhibits turned newel post and balusters; and original hardware, including butt hinges, milkglass door knobs, and decorative brass bell and letter slot in the apartment entrance.

The barn, which predates the Almshouse, is of post and beam construction, clapboarded and shingled on the exterior. A large shed addition has been added to the north elevation. It was purchased as part of the original 6 acre site in 1876 and was moved closer to the main house in 1894. A silo, added in 1918 and costing \$250, no longer stands. The "tramp house"; a small, one room, wood frame structure with brick chimney, double barn doors and porch; was erected in the fall of 1876. The chicken coops are small sheds with horizontal plank siding and in disrepair.

The possibility of the presence of subsurface structural and material culture remains is undetermined.

8. Significance

Rockland Almshouse, 198 Spring St., Rockland, MA

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-1982	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1876; 1899

Builder/Architect Reed and Kelley (draftsmen);
Hebberd and Ames (builders)

Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

The Rockland Almshouse possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. It stands as a representative virtually intact, and regionally rare surviving example of mid to late 19th century municipal almshouse architecture. Further, the complex retains historical significance through association with the community development of Rockland and as a product of prevalent social/humanitarian values of the period. Thus, the property meets criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places.

Both the almshouses of the 19th century and their predecessors, the poorfarms of the Federal period, represent early public efforts to cope with members of society unable to care for themselves. As these people were dependent on the community, the community in turn provided housing, food and medical treatment at the almshouse until they were able to support themselves or be transferred elsewhere for specialized care. In the 20th century, the local municipal almshouse system gradually faded and was superceded by state sponsored institutions and by the national welfare system.

Arrangements for construction of an almshouse was one of the first issues addressed at town meeting following incorporation of the town of Rockland from part of Abington in 1874; this concern was second only to the erection of a schoolhouse. The Rockland Town Reports of 1875, '76, and '77 report in detail the building of the Almshouse as well as the citizen's concern for the poor and indigent and the logic behind the planning of the structures. The decision in and of itself to build a new almshouse structure is notable for this period. Commonly, towns, poorer ones in particular, continued the practice of purchasing existing farms rather than going to the trouble and expense of constructing a specially designed building. At this time, Rockland was participating in a burgeoning local footwear manufacturing economy. The Almshouse may thus be interpreted as a reflection of growing economic prosperity and increasing population in the newly formed town.

On May 5, 1876, the Selectmen purchased six acres of land including a barn (still standing) from Horatio Baker. Construction proceeded quickly and the Almshouse opened October 1, 1876, under the supervision of Mr. and Mrs. Columbus Alger. Subsequent caretakers were Mr. and Mrs. Charles E. Sanders (1897-1913) and Mr. and Mrs. Charles W. Wyatt and family (1913-1979).

On November 4, 1876, a small "tramp house" was erected on the property at an expense of \$160. This was necessary due to an increase of indigent

(continued)

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet Rockland Almshouse
198 Spring St., Rockland Item number 8 Page 1

travelers in the town and was considered a preferable alternative to jail. Food as well as shelter was provided. In 1918, during the influenza epidemic, the main building's south wing was utilized as a hospital under the jurisdiction of the Board of Health and the supervision of Mr. B.J. Fitzgerald.

When it closed in 1979, the Rockland Almshouse had been in continuous use as an Almshouse for 103 years. Ledgers indicate that the occupants received extremely good care; a high percentage were able to recoup themselves and re-enter society to lead profitable lives.

Architecturally, the Rockland Almshouse fits well within the parameters of plan and styling typical of municipal almshouses known to have been built in the Boston area, southeastern Massachusetts and elsewhere, from the 1850's through the 1880's. The Rockland Almshouse, and most others, differed from contemporary transitional Greek Revival/Italianate residential architecture in internal plan and scale, but not dramatically in style. Very few of these are known to survive, particularly with a high degree of integrity, in Massachusetts. Later examples tended to be State run and to take on a more campus-like, rather than farm-like appearance. The almshouse in Raynham, affiliated with the Taunton State Hospital and constructed in the late 1870s, is the only known example of this later type to survive in original condition in the area.

The identity of the architect of the Rockland Almshouse is uncertain, although Messrs. Reed and Kelly are known to have assisted in drafting the plans. Amos S. Reed was the builder reputedly responsible for two of the most notable buildings in the business district, the Phoenix and Bigelow buildings (1924; 1929). However, it is more likely that he built the earlier buildings of the same names which burned in 1923, or that they were not the same Mr. Reed. The Almshouse builders were listed as Messrs. William H. Heberd (a carpenter) and Ames.

In sum, the Rockland Almhouse, as a complex as well as individual structure, is an extremely important and perhaps singular survivor of its type in the region. Because the buildings, layout and land use remain virtually unchanged, the Almshouse continues to reflect a prudent standard of communaliving and community concern for the poor and indigent of society: the interior retains dormitory rooms, communal bathrooms and dining rooms; the "tramp house" still stands on the site; the barn which housed animals remains intact; and the gardens are presently cultivated.

The potential of obtaining additional information on the site through archaeological research is undetermined at present. Two small structures are known from photographs to have stood on the property in the past. Testing in their vicinity would be profitable to establish their exact location and function. Any trash deposits which may exist on the site would provide invaluable data on the life style of the Almshouse inhabitants.

(continued)

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Rockland Almshouse

Continuation sheet 198 Spring St., Rockland Item number

8

Page 2

In addition, a prehistoric component may be present; French's Stream, at the eastern border of the site, is traditionally said to have been utilized by native populations.

9. Major Bibliographical References

1982, Historic and Archaeological Resources of the Boston Area. Massachusetts Historical Commission, Boston, MA
1982, Historic and Archaeological Resources of Southeastern Massachusetts. Massachusetts Historical Commission, Boston, MA

(continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 6+

Quadrangle name Whitman, MA

Quadrangle scale 1:25000

UMT References

A

1	9
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3	4	1	2	0	0	0
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4	6	6	4	0	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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3	4	1	8	5	0
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4	6	6	3	9	0	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

1	9
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3	4	1	7	9	0
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4	6	6	4	0	8	0
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D

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3	4	1	9	3	0
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4	6	6	4	1	7	0
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Verbal boundary description and justification The present boundaries correspond to those purchased by the Town of Rockland in 1874. See attached map; page #57, parcel 44.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

Virginia A. Fitch, Preservation Planner
name/title with Fred N. Kugel, Chairman, Rockland Historical Commission

organization Massachusetts Historical Comm. date December, 1982

street & number 294 Washington St. telephone (617) 727-8470

city or town Boston state MA

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☒ state ☐ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Peter L. Weselowski

title State Historic Preservation Officer, MHC

date 3/14/83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet Rockland Almshouse
198 Spring St., Rockland Item number 9

Page 1

1982, Rockland Town Report. Unpublished manuscript on file, Massachusetts
Historical Commission, Boston, MA

1876-77, Town Report, Rockland, MA, p. 25

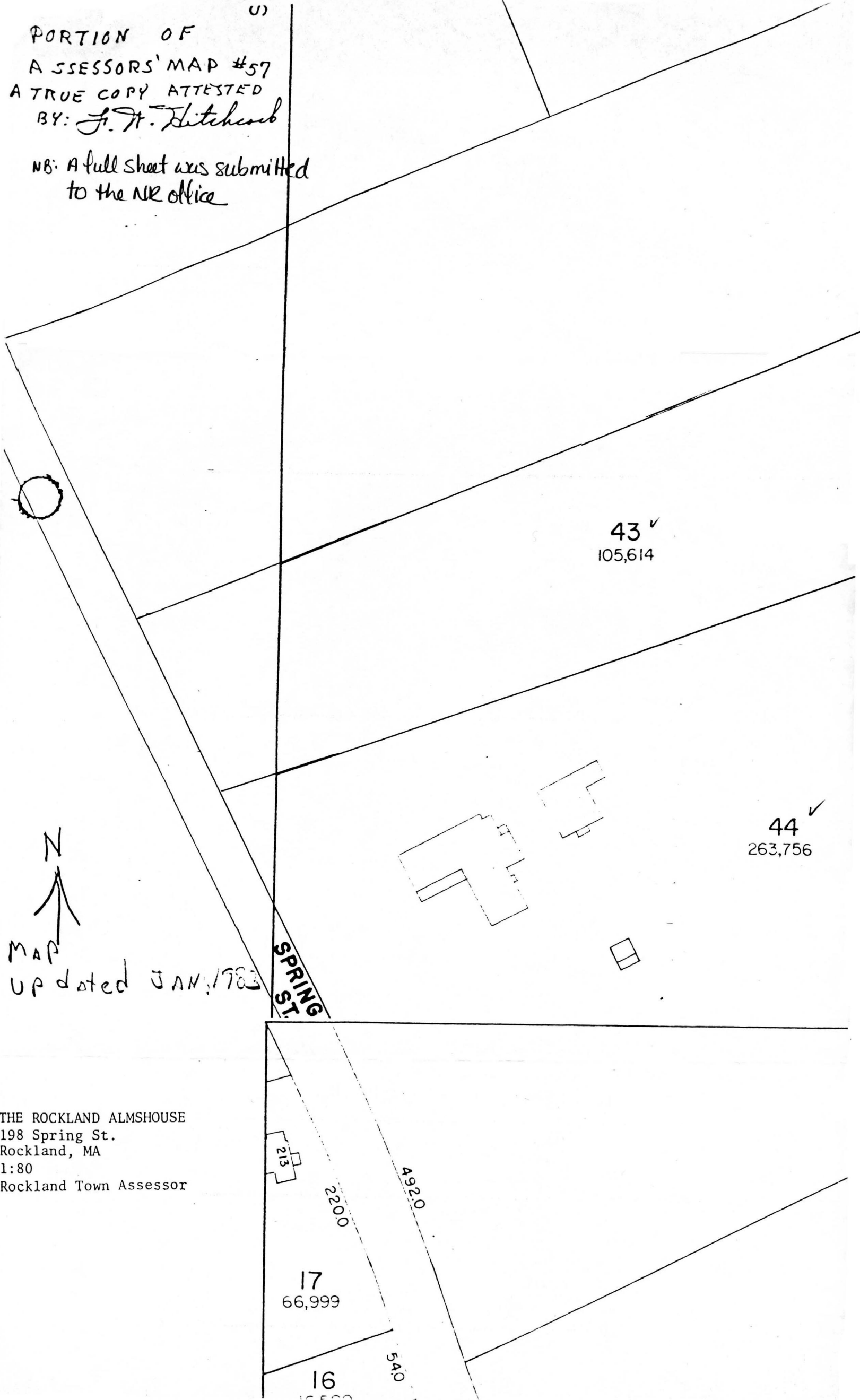
1894, Town Report, Rockland, MA, p. 54

1897-1919, Rockland Almshouse record book of Charles E. Sanders and
Charles W. Wyatt

U)

PORTION OF
ASSESSORS' MAP #57
A TRUE COPY ATTESTED
BY: *J. H. Hitchcock*

NB: A full sheet was submitted
to the NR office



N
↑
MAP
Updated JAN. 1983

THE ROCKLAND ALMSHOUSE
198 Spring St.
Rockland, MA
1:80
Rockland Town Assessor

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

WHITMAN
MASSACHUSETTS
7.5 MINUTE SECTION

SOUTH WEYMOUTH 3.5 MI.
57' 30"

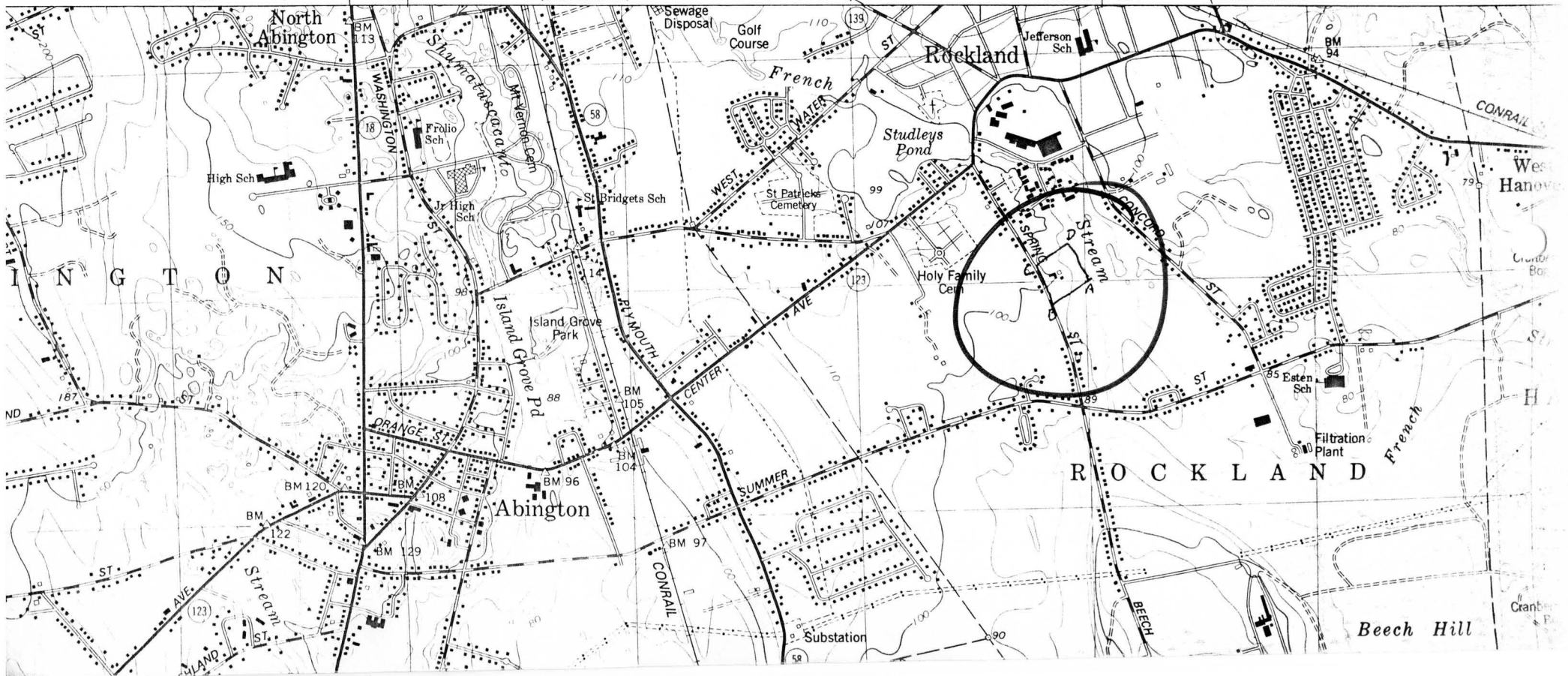
6868 III NW
(WEYMOUTH)

RANDOLPH 8 MI.
1.1 MI. TO MASS. 58

55' 760 000 FEET

123 NORTH HANOVER 2.9 MI.

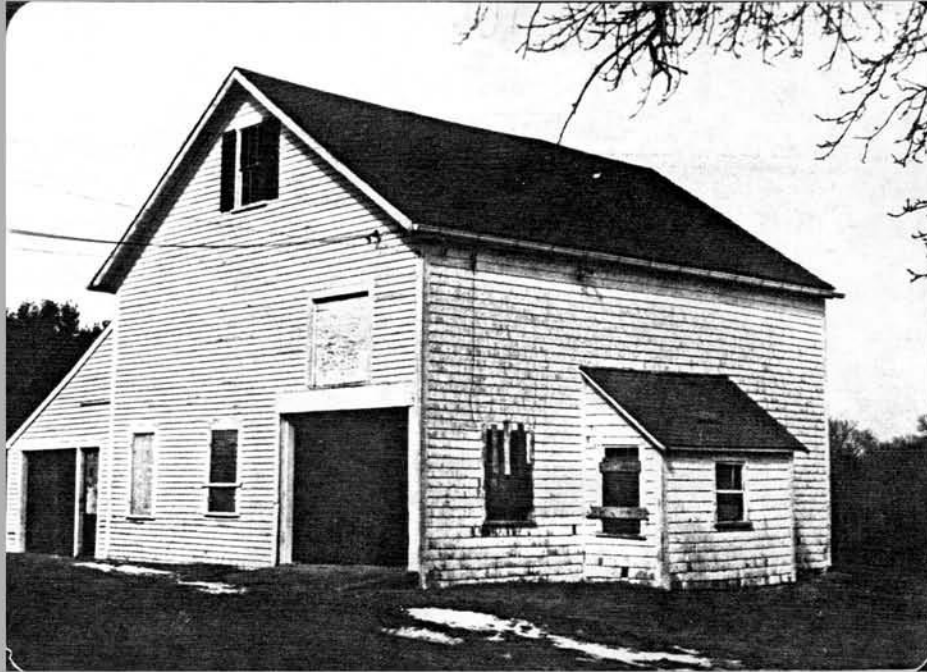
344





1. [The Rockland Almshouse, south and west facades, looking north. Unattributed photograph, no date.]

The Rockland Almshouse, Rockland (Plymouth Co.), MA



2. [Rockland Almhouse Barn. Unattributed photocopy of original photograph, no date]



3. [Rockland Almhouse "tramp house." Unattributed photocopy of original photograph, no date]