

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED  
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 Sheffield House

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Beach Road, Quonochontaug

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Charlestown

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF 2

Representative Edward Beard

STATE

Rhode Island

CODE

44

COUNTY

Washington

CODE

009

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mrs. Doris Sclater

STREET & NUMBER

Beach Road, Quonochontaug

CITY, TOWN

Charlestown

STATE

Rhode Island

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Town Hall, Town of Charlestown

STREET & NUMBER

Route 2

CITY, TOWN

Charlestown

STATE

Rhode Island

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Survey of Rhode Island Architecture, National Society of Colonial Dames in Rhode Island

DATE

1932

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Rhode Island Historical Society Library

CITY, TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Sheffield House, a shingled structure facing south and the ocean, is composed of one-and-a-half-story, gambrel-roofed section three bays wide, and a one-story gabled ell, with a massive stone chimney set between the two sections so as to serve both, making essentially a center chimney-center stair hall plan. Originally part of the Town of Westerly, this early farm is now surrounded by the houses of Central Beach, Quonochontaug, in Charlestown.

One of the most interesting aspects of the house is its plan, characteristic of the early houses of southern Rhode Island. The one-and-a-half-story section on the right or east is of basic three-room end-chimney plan and includes a large parlor with two small rooms at the rear. The ell on the left or west consists of a single room with a large cooking fireplace built into the massive chimney. On the second story, there is an open storage area above the entry with a garret to the west and the parlor chamber to the east. A narrow passage between the chimney and the gable garret originally provided access to a small chamber behind the chimney.

According to deeds and probate records, the house was probably constructed sometime between 1685 and 1713 by Joseph Stanton. A late nineteenth century continuation of the gabled ell to the west, a modern enclosed porch on the northwest side of the house, and a dormer on the north of the gambrel section are the only exterior alterations. The extent of the original gabled ell is easily determined by the dimensions of the stone basement beneath and the change from 3" x 3" hewn rafters to 2" x 4" circular-sawn beams in the attic above.

The framing of the house includes exposed posts in the corners of all original rooms and a still-exposed summer beam dividing the parlor from east to west. The ceilings have been lowered in all rooms except the parlor. The walls were all plastered on the interior and are presently papered. The original sash was replaced by a two-over-two form and the window frames changed in the nineteenth century. The house is built on a stone foundation with a crawl space below and a root cellar at the west end.

The entrance, placed on the south side in the most western bay of the two-story section, has a four-panel door with a horizontal line of three transom lights across the top (actually in the door and not the frame). Within, a small entry stair hall separates the parlor from the keeping room. Situated south of the large stone chimney, an enclosed stair of eleven risers ascends from the entry with a small closet beneath. Exposed hewn corner posts and plates, pegged and roughly chamfered, a 1" picture molding, and a beaded, vertically-panelled closet door complete the hall woodwork.

See Continuation Sheet 1

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CONTINUATION SHEET 1

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The kitchen in the one-story ell is dominated by the stone fireplace along its east wall. Approximately 5' high by 7' wide by 2½' deep, the fireplace opening has curved side walls, (more characteristic of early brick chimney construction than of stone) and a beehive oven in the rear right corner. The lintel, charred and now covered by modern tin, could well be original. The mantel above is formed by a cyma reversa molding supporting a deep shelf. The wall above the mantel has replaced narrow, vertically-beaded, matched boarding, identical to the interior finish of the ell addition. The plain cornerposts are exposed, but a lowered ceiling conceals the girts and summer. The floor, composed of wide boards of various dimensions, appears to be original and has been painted.

The keeping room originally opened on the north into a bedroom behind the chimney. Another door on the north wall led outside where a modern enclosed porch has since been added. (Two walls of that porch show early exterior shingling painted a buff color.) A door in the west wall led into a small, unheated room, extending another six feet to the west, beneath which is a root cellar. The gable ell was lengthened in this direction during the second half of the nineteenth century; and today the area west of the keeping room includes a two-room kitchen and a bathroom.

The parlor east of the chimney is the most finely finished room in the house and is the only one on the main floor to maintain its original ceiling height. Corner posts, plates, and summer beam are still visible and are planed smooth and decorated by a large bead at their edges. The focus of the parlor is its panelled fireplace surround. Raised beveled panelling extends one yard to either side of the fireplace and from floor to ceiling. Two panels two feet across flank the height of the fireplace. Above, a horizontal line of five raised panels (roughly 2' x 1') define the form. At the top, two nearly square panels flank an oblong panel equal to the width of the fireplace and the three center panels of the second course. A later mantel shelf has been added between the second and third levels of panels. A good early bolection molding frames the fireplace opening. The original wide floor boards remain in this room. A door contemporary with the panelling leads from the parlor into the bedroom to the north. Chair railing completes the original woodwork of the parlor. Wood latches with latch strings are seen in this room and throughout the house. Several wrought iron hinges also remain.

Two bedchambers are located north of the chimney and the parlor in the gambrel section of the house. The requirements of closet space and central heating have changed slightly the shape of these rooms. However, exposed corner posts,

See Continuation Sheet 2

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CONTINUATION SHEET 2

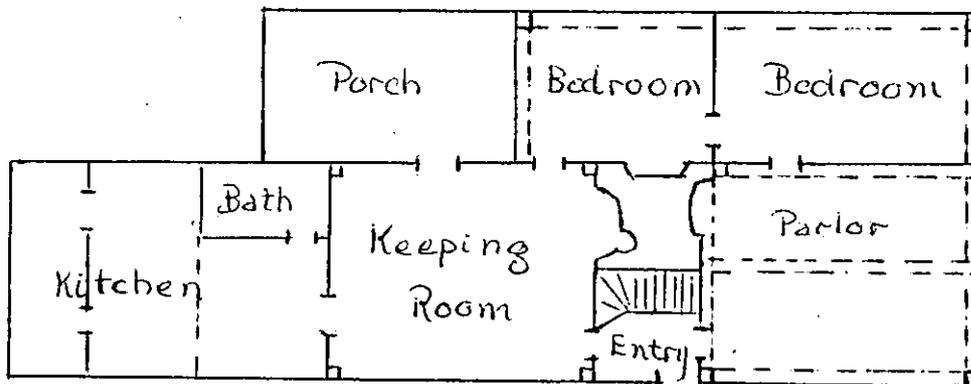
ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 3

doorframes, and the mantelpiece still remain in the bedroom to the west as examples of early woodwork. Both the flooring and the fenestration have been altered. The west bedroom's fireplace is the narrowest in the house and is finished by a panelled mantelpiece consisting of three small raised panels above the fireplace and a large oblong one above those. The opening of the fireplace is framed by a cavetto molding. Today, this back fireplace is partially filled in and a modern Franklin stove extends into the room.

On the second story, the open area at the top of the stairs was probably used for storage. To the west of this area runs the garret of the gabled ell which was never finished. The now-closed space between the garret and the chimney allowed passage from the stairs to the small bedroom north of the chimney. This room has hewn rafters, a door dating from the original construction of the house, wide beaded floor boarding (a feature unique to this room), but no fireplace.

The parlor chamber east of the stairs has been altered by the addition of a bathroom at its north-west corner and a partition running north and south to create a hall connecting the bath and rear bedroom with the stairs. As a result, the fireplace for this room is now located in the hall. Its treatment resembled that of the fireplace and mantelpiece in the northwest bedroom on the ground floor. However, the opening has been closed, a large panel at the top has been removed and its space converted to book shelves, and the edge of the mantelpiece has been obscured by the lowered ceiling. The bathroom at the end of the hall is lighted by a dormer, one of the few exterior alterations. Partitions along the north and south walls of the chamber hide the slant of the gambrel roof and create crawl spaces which have been used for storage. A tradition of these areas having been used by the Underground Railroad is without specific documentation.



# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Sheffield House is an outstanding example of a Rhode Island farmhouse, relatively unaltered from its construction at the turn of the eighteenth century. On the exterior, the only changes -- extension of the gable ell, addition of one dormer and an enclosed porch on the north side -- are sympathetic to the house's original character. The plan of contemporary one and two story sections with a central chimney set slightly within the two-story form is found locally in the South County area. On the interior, few changes have been made to the original plan. The rooms are distinguished by handsome panelling and mostly original doors.

The house was probably constructed by Joseph Stanton (1646-1714), third son of Thomas Stanton (d. 1677). Thomas, called "the Interpreter," sailed for America in 1635, landing in Virginia and travelling north to Boston. Because of his ability to understand Indian dialects, he was sent by Governor Winthrop of Massachusetts to settle legal matters in Connecticut and in 1637 settled in Hartford. When Winthrop sought an interview with Ninigret, the Narragansett sachem, at Wequetequoc (near Stonington, Connecticut), Stanton's talents were again required. This trip fostered an interest in the Pawcatuck Valley, to which he moved in 1650. Thomas' son, Joseph, settled on land his father acquired from the Narragansetts for service as an interpreter.

In 1685, Joseph is recorded in Boston as leasing "half the farm or neck named Quannecontague, where I do now live." This reference cannot be assumed to verify the construction of the house by this early date. In Joseph's will, probated February 14, 1713, he stated: "know by all men present that I Joseph Stanton, Senator from Westerly, Colony of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations in New England, for divers good cause and consideration... and especially for love and affectation I bare my son Thomas... to him, a certain parcel of land... being a part of my farm I do now live on called Quomocontoge Neck and also my dwelling house I now live in." Neither document describes the house enough to definitely attribute this building to Joseph Stanton. Another early 18th century house and a ruin, both nearby on Quonochontaug Neck, could also be the "dwelling house" mentioned in Stanton's will. Joseph Stanton's name is connected with this house primarily by oral tradition.

Joseph's son, Thomas, had no surviving sons, so the farm was deeded in 1753 to his son-in-law, Nathaniel Sheffield, and hence the house's name today. The Sheffields sold the house in 1845 to the Pendleton family, who conveyed it

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in 1886 to a Mr. Lucas, who used it as a summer house called "Locust Farm." There have been several subsequent owners all of whom have respected the integrity of the house. Although presently surrounded by a resort community, the Sheffield House remains a living document of early settlement and vernacular architecture in Rhode Island.

Its chief architectural significance rests not only on its excellent state of preservation but also, and more specifically, on its plan. The combination of two sections of varying heights around a common and thus central chimney is a feature found in a number of South County houses of early date. The study of these houses has isolated an early plan type that has not been previously identified.



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PAGE

2

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Stanton, William A. A Record, Genealogical, Biographical and Statistical of  
Thomas Stanton of Connecticut and His Descendants, 1635-1891. Albany:  
Joel Munsell's Sons, 1891.



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**1 NAME**

HISTORIC The Sheffield House

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

CITY, TOWN Charlestown

\_\_\_\_VICINITY OF

COUNTY Washington

STATE Rhode  
Island

**3 PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT Keith N. Morgan

DATE OF PHOTO December, 1974

NEGATIVE FILED AT Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission  
150 Benefit Street, Providence, Rhode Island

**4 IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

South facade

PHOTO NO.

1



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Fireplace, Keeping Room

PHOTO NO.

2



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COUNTY Washington

STATE Rhode Island

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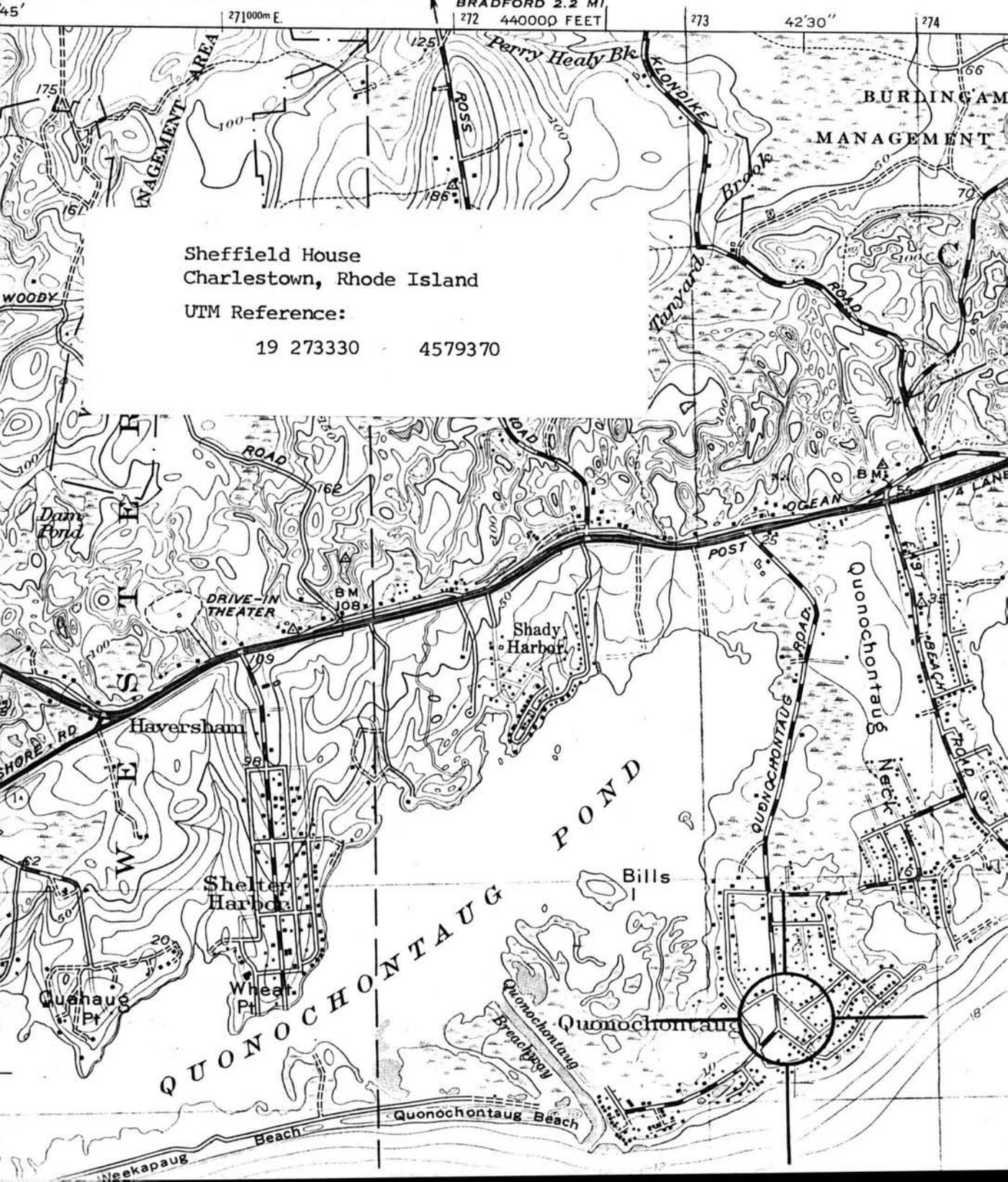
Fireplace wall, parlor

PHOTO NO.

3

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

ALTON 5.6 MI.  
BRADFORD 2.2 MI  
272 440000 FEET



Sheffield House  
Charlestown, Rhode Island

UTM Reference:

19 273330 4579370

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY MAP FORM**

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CITY, TOWN

Charlestown

\_\_\_VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Washington

STATE

Rhode  
Island

**3 MAP REFERENCE**

SOURCE U. S. Geological Survey

SCALE 1 : 24,000

DATE 1942; revised 1953; photorevised 1970

**4 REQUIREMENTS**

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES