

# Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

## Scanned Record Cover Page

<b>Inventory No:</b>	WTI.H
<b>Historic Name:</b>	Polly Hill Arboretum
<b>Common Name:</b>	Barnard's Inn Farm
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>City/Town:</b>	West Tisbury
<b>Village/Neighborhood:</b>	
<b>Local No:</b>	
<b>Year Constructed:</b>	
<b>Architect(s):</b>	
<b>Architectural Style(s):</b>	
<b>Use(s):</b>	Agricultural; Arboretum or Botanical Garden; Orchard; Secondary Dwelling House; Sheep Farm
<b>Significance:</b>	Agriculture; Architecture; Conservation; Education; Exploration Settlement; Invention; Landscape Architecture; Performing Arts; Recreation; Science
<b>Area(s):</b>	
<b>Designation(s):</b>	



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125  
[www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc](http://www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc)

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# FORM A - AREA

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

		<b>H</b>	216-223, 906-910
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## Photograph



**Town/City:** West Tisbury

**Place** (*neighborhood or village*):

**Name of Area:** Polly Hill Arboretum

**Present Use:** not for profit public garden

**Construction Dates or Period:** ca. 1750s - present

**Overall Condition:** good

### Major Intrusions and Alterations:

1930s Cow Barn renovated to residence,  
1998 Homestead renovation, new buildings added 1998-2009

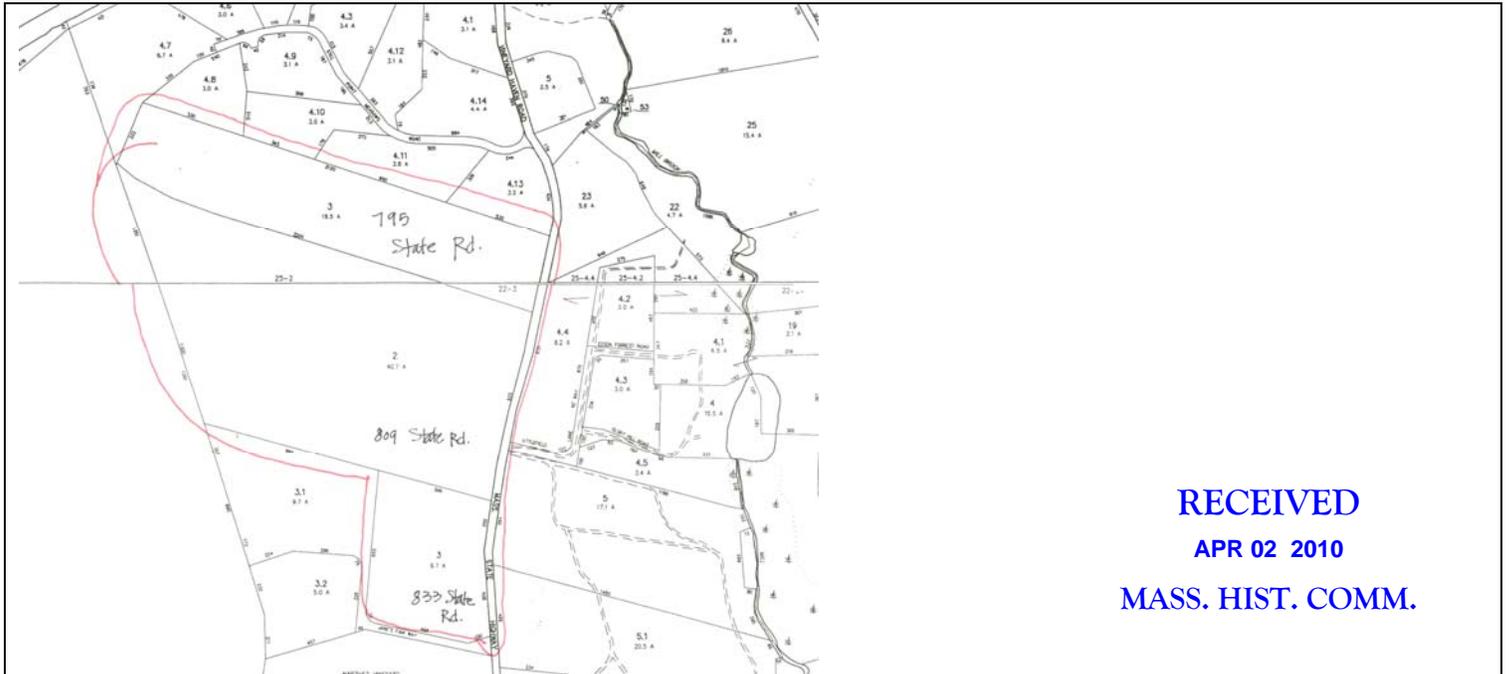
**Acreage:** 70

**Recorded by:** Karin Stanley

**Organization:** West Tisbury Historic Commission

**Date** (*month/year*): March, 2010

## Locus Map



**RECEIVED**  
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see continuation sheet

# INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

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Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.  
*If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Describe architectural, structural and landscape features and evaluate in terms of other areas within the community.

### Topography and Layout

The Polly Hill Arboretum (PHA) occupies 70 acres off of State Road, West Tisbury on the Island of Martha's Vineyard, Massachusetts. West Tisbury has retained much of its rural agricultural character preserving an extensive historic district and open space through the use of agricultural preservation, and private conservation restrictions. Additional land acquisitions made by Island conservation organizations and the Martha's Vineyard Land Bank contribute to this preservation. The Polly Hill Arboretum is part of a significant area of open land in the town. PHA has a 60 acre conservation restriction and abuts other conservation lands in West Tisbury. The overall context of the property is rural farmland with open meadows and woodlands. Topography varies from being level in the area of fields and buildings with an elevation of 60 feet, rising moderately in a westerly direction to an elevation of 140 – 150 feet. This topography reflects the geological formation of a terminal moraine with adjacent outwash plain which is characteristic of Martha's Vineyard. The many stone walls on the property and the presence of glacial erratics in the woodlands are reminders of this geological formation. One stone wall boundary incorporates a very large boulder in its fence line. There is also evidence of early stone quarrying activities in the woodlands. Approximately two-thirds of the property is native woodlands of mature oaks, beech, and hickory forest.

The remaining one-third of the site, located along State Road., consists of the farmstead with open fields, stone walls, historic buildings, newer Arboretum facilities, and horticulturally improved areas of ornamental plantings. Two large open meadows, once agricultural fields, Datasheet #7) bounded by stone walls (# 8) form the center of the property. Structures consist of four original buildings: Homestead (# 1), Cowbarn (# 2), Gym/Tool Shed (# 3) Far Barn (# 4), and additional Arboretum facilities: the Visitor Center (# 6), Greenhouse/Shadehouse (# 12), and Maintenance building (# 13) which were added later. The Littlefield House (# 11), a residence, was purchased in 2002 along with an additional 10 acres. (This acreage is not included in the original Conservation Restriction).

### Buildings

#### Luce, Barnard House (form 25-2)

The Barnard Luce house known as the "Homestead" (# 1) is a fine example of a Cape Cod style of dwelling house, so common in Southeastern New England, especially on the Cape and Islands. It is a full Cape of a story and a half with symmetrical façade consisting of a central front door with a panel of lights above and two double hung windows on either side. It also has the traditional "ell" at the rear of the structure, also common to this style of building. The form, scale and appointments of the building conform to the Cape Cod tradition except for the lack of a central chimney. There is presently no evidence of such a chimney anywhere in the house. The house has been extensively renovated over many years, yet it has retained many features of a Cape style dwelling typical of the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

The Luce family's occupation of this land may be traced back to the 1670s when Henry Luce acquired the property. The land was one of 16 original 40-acre home lots created by four associates who purchased a large parcel from the Wampanoag in 1669. Historian Charles Banks noted in "The History of Martha's Vineyard" that Henry Luce had a dwelling on his property at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century. It is unknown where this dwelling stood, but it may have been closer to the

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Mill Brook, East of where the Barnard Luce homestead lies. It is known that the building called the Homestead was occupied by the Luce family from its construction until 1860. Barnard Luce, (b. 1778), great, great grandson of Henry, ran a well documented inn here in the early 1800's.

The house faces east towards State Road. The oldest portion of this dwelling most likely dates from the mid to late 1700s. Differences in joists visible in the basement indicate the house may have been a half house or three-quarter house, with the north end being the original. The fieldstone basement, under the front half of the house, still retains original floor joists in place next to their modern replacements. All of the early joists have extensive insect damage. There are two brick stacks on either side of the basement stairs, each about 20 inches square, unattached to the first floor. These chimneys were likely built after the removal of the central chimney for stoves during the 19th century. Sometime in the 1800s the southern portion was added creating a full Cape Cod colonial of 1 ½ stories that is common to West Tisbury and the Island. The house has a stone and granite foundation with exterior natural shingles and roof, and painted trim. On the first floor, the front door opens to a hallway with a stairway to the second floor to the right of the hall. The north room to the right of the front door contains a decorative dentil molding below the ceiling and a fireplace mantel with fluted detail under the mantelshelf.

The downstairs floorboards are random width pine, stripped and finished. They do not have substantial widths and appear to be replacement flooring. The north side room on the second floor has painted wide pine boards of age as evidenced by deep wear patterns around the large knots of the boards as well as areas of cutting and replaced boards, various patches etc. A rectangular patch in this floor is over the area of the downstairs fireplace, perhaps indicating a floor register to allow heat from a stove or fireplace to this upstairs room.

The second floor south room contains the structural timbers of a once curved ceiling. This feature is common on Martha's Vineyard during the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century and is often seen in one of the upstairs bedrooms.

Changes and additions, mostly undocumented, have been made over the many years of the dwelling's existence. The most recent were made in 1998 when the building was converted to Arboretum offices. At that time Thompson & Rose Architects renovated the house in a manner sensitive to its historic nature, considering structural rehabilitation, change in use, and respect for integrity of historic materials and construction techniques. As they write in their report, "The materials and modes of assembly, regardless of when they joined the ensemble, serve to document and explain different methods of production and construction in this Massachusetts island community over the last two centuries." They cite chalk marks of earlier builders, marks of hammers, saws and trowels, hand-worked wood, salvaged structural members, hand-split lath, and distinctive floor boards and wainscoting as examples. The chalk signature remains visible because a window was created to view into the exposed boards. Lath, which was both saw cut and hand-split, remains visible on the second floor where the plaster was removed and the lath allowed to form the walls.

Although the true age of the house is unknown, its footprint, scale and remaining architectural features are very much in keeping with the remaining early homes of Martha's Vineyard. While other early Vineyard houses have been torn down due to the cost of renovation, this house has been saved for use as the Arboretum's working core and it fits into the landscape seamlessly.

## Far Barn

The Far Barn (# 4) is a single story, gable-roofed wood-frame building, with a loft along the south side of the interior. This building is located the furthest from State Road and is flanked by fields on either side. The barn measures 29 feet wide by 26 feet long. Directly adjacent to the barn is the "slaughterhouse", a single story, gable-roofed wood-frame building measuring 16 feet wide by 15 feet long. It has an addition for a bathroom, no longer in use. In a 2009 assessment, by Ann Beha Architects and the consulting firm of Structures North, the Far Barn was considered in good condition given its age and found to be significant in preserving the story of the evolution of the building and cultural landscape of the Arboretum site. No documented building date is known, framing techniques however clearly show two periods of construction.

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"Scribe rule" construction including splayed posts in the two southern-most bays may indicate an initial construction in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. "Square rule" construction exists in the northern bay indicating a later addition to the barn, possibly during the sheep farm era, ca. 1860 to the 1920s. Currently the Far Barn is used for Arboretum educational programming and events. In the near future some structural repairs will be needed.

## Cowbarn (form 25-2)

The dwelling known as the Cowbarn (# 2) was a barn when the property was purchased from the Littlefield family in 1926. The original construction date is unknown. In 1933/34 it was renovated into a dwelling and, in appearance, remains little changed. The building has a granite foundation, natural shingles and roof, and painted trim. It has center and end chimneys and an opened wood porch on the rear elevation. In 2008 the building was again renovated, changing the use to a member's library and a visiting speaker's apartment. The exterior appearance was not changed, although along with visible interior improvements, the 1950s infrastructure was updated and brought up to code. Blown-in cellulose insulation was added between the interior and exterior walls. This, along with a new furnace and a zonal heating system, made the building more energy efficient and fit for year-round use. Better climate controls now help protect the valuable horticultural library collection.

## Gym/Tool Shed

The small building known as the Gym (# 3) located between the Homestead (#1) and Cowbarn (# 2) is another early out- building used for storage. In the 1930's Mrs. Butcher outfitted the farm shed with rings and a trapeze, and affixed a ladder to the ceiling creating a kind of monkey bars when she renovated the sheep farm into a summer home. The reconfigured farm shed became a rainy day play area; she called it the Gym. Later, two upstairs rooms were added to provide accommodations for summer help. One was called the Magnolia Room (due to the magnolia tree outside the window) and the other, the Front Bedroom. As Polly increased her gardening activities, the Gym reverted to its original use as a shed. But the name stuck and the ladder remains. With the 2009 construction of the Arboretum's new maintenance building, the Gym is no longer as heavily used for storage. The building has shingled walls and a wood shingled gable roof. At the rear of the building is an open lean-to shed constructed of irregularly sized boards. An attached potting shed is located on the left side of the building.

## Visitor Center and Public Parking Area

The Visitor Center (# 6) was built in 1998 to accommodate the transition to a public garden. Because of the desire to preserve the historical character and botanical plantings of the farmstead, this new parking and entry area was added along the north side of the property, away from the existing buildings. This small building of 756 square feet services the institution as a greeting area and orientation space for visitors, volunteers, and students. It was designed by Thompson and Rose Architects, with landscape design by Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates. There is also an adjacent bathroom building. The buildings nestle into the existing woodlands and are linked by a trellis topped with native locust. These modern buildings are constructed of stone, Douglas fir, yellow cedar, glass, and copper.

## Additional Buildings

In 2002 the Arboretum acquired an additional 10 acres of land on adjacent property. This was also property owned by the Littlefield family, owners of the original 40 acres sold to the Butcher family in 1926. The property included a residential dwelling, the **1844 Samuel Washington House**, (form 25-03.1, data sheet # 11). This is a modified 3/4 Cape with painted shingle siding, a front porch, chimney, and side addition. It continues to be a dwelling, providing housing for Arboretum staff.

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The remainder of the newly constructed buildings at PHA are located on the Littlefield property. Historically, this property has ties to the sheep farming era of the Littlefield's, and the long-standing neighborly relationship that developed between the Littlefield's and Butcher/Hill families. New construction in this area does not infringe on the historic nature of the old farmstead of the Arboretum proper.

The **Greenhouse and Shadehouse** (# 12) was built in 2007. The greenhouse is a single unit Quonset hut type structure covered with double walled polyethylene. An existing garage was renovated into a working headhouse. This wooden structure is a garage storage unit, with an office and potting area. The Shadehouse, located next to the Greenhouse was also built in 2007, as a large storage area in a poly-shade cloth Quonset hut type structure. This area provides additional protected space to nurture small plants before field planting.

The **Littlefield Maintenance Building** (# 13), constructed in 2009, provides a secure storage area for equipment along with office space. It replaces the old Gym/Tool Shed as a storage facility. This building was designed to harmonize with the existing buildings.

## Other Landscape Features

Since 1940 additional landscape features have been added to the Butcher property which are significant to the development of the Arboretum landscape.

After acquiring the property in 1926 Margaret Butcher was determined to clear the stone walls (# 8) of vegetation and retain the open feeling of the landscape by mowing and maintaining the agricultural fields. This decision continues to inform the Arboretum's management of these areas, with mowing and prescribed burning used to keep the fields open.

In 1940 Mrs. Butcher had a large outdoor field stone **fireplace** (#5) built adjacent to the Far Barn to augment her summer entertaining. Recently, the built-in wrought iron grill was reconstructed by a local blacksmith, from original plans. It is believed that crane, rack and the andirons were made by Orin Norton, an Edgartown blacksmith. The bottom pieces of the andirons are said to be chunks of rail from the Martha's Vineyard railroad that ran from Cottage City to Edgartown between 1874 and 1896.

Other special landscape features were added by Polly Hill as she developed the property into an Arboretum and they remain highlights for visitors today. Two favorites are:

**Polly's Play Pen** (# 9) a 268 x 35 ft. rectangular fenced in garden, was built in the 1970s. This was one of the first areas Polly brought under cultivation because she wanted to protect her special plants from rabbits and deer. Many of the plants Polly selected and introduced to the greater horticultural world, including her famous North Tisbury azaleas, grow here along with other rare plants, trees, and woodland perennials.

The **Dogwood Allee** (# 10) is a double row of Kousa Dogwoods extending for 284 feet. Several of the trees forming the allée are Polly's introductions, selected for their habit of growth, showy flowers, and ornamental fruit.

Other Polly Hill features include a locust bower, the old nursery area, the conifer rows, a native beech grove, holly park, a nationally recognized stewartia collection, and many significant trees and plants, such as the Julian Hill Magnolia, Dawn Redwood, Enkianthus, and special Rhododendron collection.. Overall the Arboretum's living collection is a diverse assemblage of over 1600 taxa (species) of primarily woody plants.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

*Explain historical development of the area. Discuss how this relates to the historical development of the community.*

The Polly Hill Arboretum is remarkable for the vision of its creator and its renowned collection of woody plants, including a collection of stewartia trees that has been designated a collection of national significance by the North American Plant Collection Consortium. It is equally significant as a rare surviving agricultural landscape, open to the public, representing over 300 years of the Island's history. Here visitors discover a classic Vineyard landscape that retains its connection to the past. What began as a late 17<sup>th</sup> century colonial homestead became a sheep farm in the 1860s and, by the 1920s, a summer residence for Polly Hill's family. It is now a horticultural center devoted to the study and cultivation of plants and landscape preservation. Open meadows, crisscrossing stone walls, and old farmstead buildings harmonize with rural West Tisbury and represent a continuum of rural land uses.

The property the Arboretum occupies was part of one of the 16 original 40-acre home lots created by four associates who purchased the land from the Wampanoag in 1669. In May of 1671 these original proprietors began selling off these home lots. The original settler of this lot was Henry Luce. Early town records indicate that he lived here by 1674. He was chosen as surveyor of highways, 1675; juror, 1677 and 1681, and selectman, 1687. By the time of his death sometime between 1687 and 1689 he and his wife Remember had ten children. Although the location of the original Luce house is unknown, the current Barnard Luce House (form 25-02 # 1) (now called the Homestead) was occupied by the Luce family until 1860. The oldest portion of this dwelling probably dates from the mid to late 1700s. Differences in joists visible in the basement indicate the house may have been a half or three-quarter house, with the north end being the original. Sometime in the 1800s the southern portion was added creating a full Cape Cod colonial of 1 ½ stories that is common to West Tisbury and the Island. During the colonial period West Tisbury's economic base was primarily farming and husbandry and this is reflected in the property. A barn on the property (now called the Far Barn, # 4) shows evidence of two periods of construction, with the earliest most likely dating to the 18<sup>th</sup> century. As the town grew it became an active community of farms, stores, a school, mills, and inns. The last Luce to own this property was Barnard Luce (1778-1856) who operated a tavern here in the early 1800's called Barnard Luce's Inn. The inn was a popular stopping point on the road to Chilmark and Gay Head (Aquinnah) and, with its location close to the village center, was an occasional meeting place for town selectmen.

In 1860 Barnard's widow Mary sold the property. After changing hands several times it was purchased by the Smith and Littlefield families. Bartlett Smith purchased the farm and, with his partner Albert Littlefield, ran it as a sheep farm. Littlefield later married Smith's sister, eventually inheriting all of Smith's land, including the original 40 acre home lot and adjacent properties. During this period in the town's history sheep farming was a lucrative business with the near by woolen mill (now the Martha's Vineyard Garden Club) producing Vineyard Satinet. This popular cloth, made with Island wool, was favored by whalers and mariners because a jacket made from it would last a seaman for several voyages. It was also during the Littlefield ownership that most of the property's stone walls were built. They provided boundary walls, a sheep shearing pen and barnyard enclosures. One portion of the property also had a small apple orchard enclosed by walls. By the 1920s the property had become run-down and was no longer a sheep farm. Times were hard on the Island with the demise of the whaling industry, the decline of farming and the competition of big off-island mills. At that time the Littlefield family sold topsoil and stones from the walls to bring in some income. In 1926 the Littlefield family sold 40 acres to Margaret and Howard Butcher, a well to-do Philadelphia family, who purchased it for use as a summer home. By the 1930s and 40s a more active summer community was forming on the Vineyard and in West Tisbury. In 1933 Mrs. Butcher renovated an existing barn (now called the Cowbarn, # 2) into a residential dwelling. She also cleared the stone walls of vegetation and fixed up the rest of the farmstead buildings, which included the old Homestead (# 1), a storage shed (# 3), and the Far Barn (# 4) with its attached building called the Slaughterhouse. Mrs. Butcher named the property the Barnard's Inn Farm, to honor Barnard Luce and the inn he once operated from the old Homestead. In 1940 Mrs. Butcher had a large outdoor fireplace (# 5) built adjacent to the Far Barn to augment the entertaining she did there. The farm became a summer social center with frequent guests and entertainments. The Far Barn was used as a summer "family room", with a sleeping loft for the children. Theatrical performances were also held there as benefits for the West Tisbury Congregational Church. The property remained a summer home for the Butcher family until their daughter Mary

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Louisa Butcher (Polly Hill) and her husband Julian Hill inherited it in 1957. It was then, at age 50, that the idea of creating an arboretum first emerged in Polly's mind. In 1964 she wrote of her experiences in *The American Horticultural Magazine*:

"Martha's Vineyard Island, five miles off the heel of Cape Cod, Massachusetts, has been my summer home for 40 years. Since I have also spent some time in Japan and observed a similarity between the climates of Martha's Vineyard and Japan, I have tried to establish examples of its rich flora on the Vineyard. Growing the seeds and plants I received from those islands, I have experimented for eight years with Japanese trees and shrubs, both evergreen and deciduous. Starting them in a nursery, I have transferred the best selections to an arboretum, or have used them to landscape the summer farm. Plants of horticultural merit from other foreign countries and our own natives were included in the tests. I have found that selections of exotic plants, mixed with the finest natives, combine in a lovely way, ornamenting the island scene."

For 40 years Polly continued her experimentation, winning 12 prestigious horticultural awards between the years 1967 and 1996, including two from the Massachusetts Horticultural Society. As Polly reached her 90's she and her family realized that something must be done with the farm. In 1992 they considered subdividing the property into a residential development of 12 lots and a plan was drawn. In the meantime Polly met Dr. David H. Smith through the Vineyard Conservation Society. Dr. Smith, impressed with the scientific nature of the plant collection and Polly's extensive plant records, approached Polly and her family and arranged for the purchase of the property. In 1997 the non-profit organization, the Polly Hill Arboretum Inc., was created to preserve Polly's botanical and horticultural legacy, to maintain the property, and continue Polly's ideas of research, education, and conservation. The purchase was accomplished through donations by David H. Smith, the Hill family, and many of Polly's horticultural colleagues. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts joined in by providing funding for a conservation restriction that will prevent development of the property in perpetuity. As stated in the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation Baseline Documentation Report (prepared by Conservation Partners, 2005), "The purpose of the CR acquisition was to preserve the open spaces on the property (approximately 30 acres of fields), to preserve the historic buildings (two of which date from the 18<sup>th</sup> century), to preserve the Polly Hill Arboretum, and to preserve the property as a whole. The property was abutting other conservation lands at the time of acquisition and that conserved lands network has since grown."

The Visitor Center (# 6), constructed in 1998, consists of two post-and-beam buildings designed by Thompson and Rose Architects of Cambridge, Massachusetts. The master plan for the Arboretum, including the design and layout of the parking area, was developed by the well-known landscape architect and Martha's Vineyard resident, Michael Van Valkenburgh of Michael Van Valkenburgh Associates.

In 2002 an additional 10 acres were acquired in cooperation with the Martha's Vineyard Museum and the Martha's Vineyard Agricultural Society. This adjacent property was also owned by the Littlefield family and includes a house dating to 1844 (form 25-03.1 - #11). In 2007 a greenhouse and nursery facility (#12) were added and, in 2009, a new maintenance building (#13) was completed.

Today as the Arboretum moves into its second decade as a public garden its visibility in the community and larger public garden network continues to grow. Through its education programs, research projects, and work with other local, national, and international organizations it is increasingly recognized as a plant resource center. In addition the Arboretum offers the public a unique opportunity to experience an old Vineyard farmstead. It is one of the few publicly accessible properties on Martha's Vineyard to preserve a continuum of land uses from the late 17<sup>th</sup> century to the present.

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Richard Burt and Jill Bouck, Homestead Research, 2010, West Tisbury Historic Commission Members

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## Area Data Sheet

MACRIS #	Map #	Name	Address	Date	Photo #
216	1 MHC 25-2	Barnard Luce Homestead	809 State Rd	Mid-late 18 <sup>th</sup> c	2,3
217	2 MHC 25-2	House 'Cowbarn'	809 State Rd	19 <sup>th</sup> c with renovations 1934/2008	4,5,6
218	3	Storage shed 'Gym'	809 State Rd	19 <sup>th</sup> c	7
219	4	Far Barn/Slaughterhouse	809 State Rd	Mid-late 18 <sup>th</sup> c and 19 <sup>th</sup> c	8
906	5	Fireplace	809 State Rd	1940	9
220	6	Visitor Center/Restrooms	795 State Rd	1998	10
907	7	Fields	809 State Rd	Mid 19 <sup>th</sup> c	
908	8	Stone Walls	Entire property	Mid 19 <sup>th</sup> c	11
909	9	Playpen Garden	809 State Rd	1970s	13
910	10	Dogwood allée	809 State Rd	1960s	14
221	11 MHC 25-03.1	Littlefield House	833 State Rd	1844	12
222	12	Greenhouse/Shadehouse	833 State Rd	2006/7	15
223	13	Littlefield Maintenance	833 State Rd	2009	16

INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET

WEST TISBURY POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

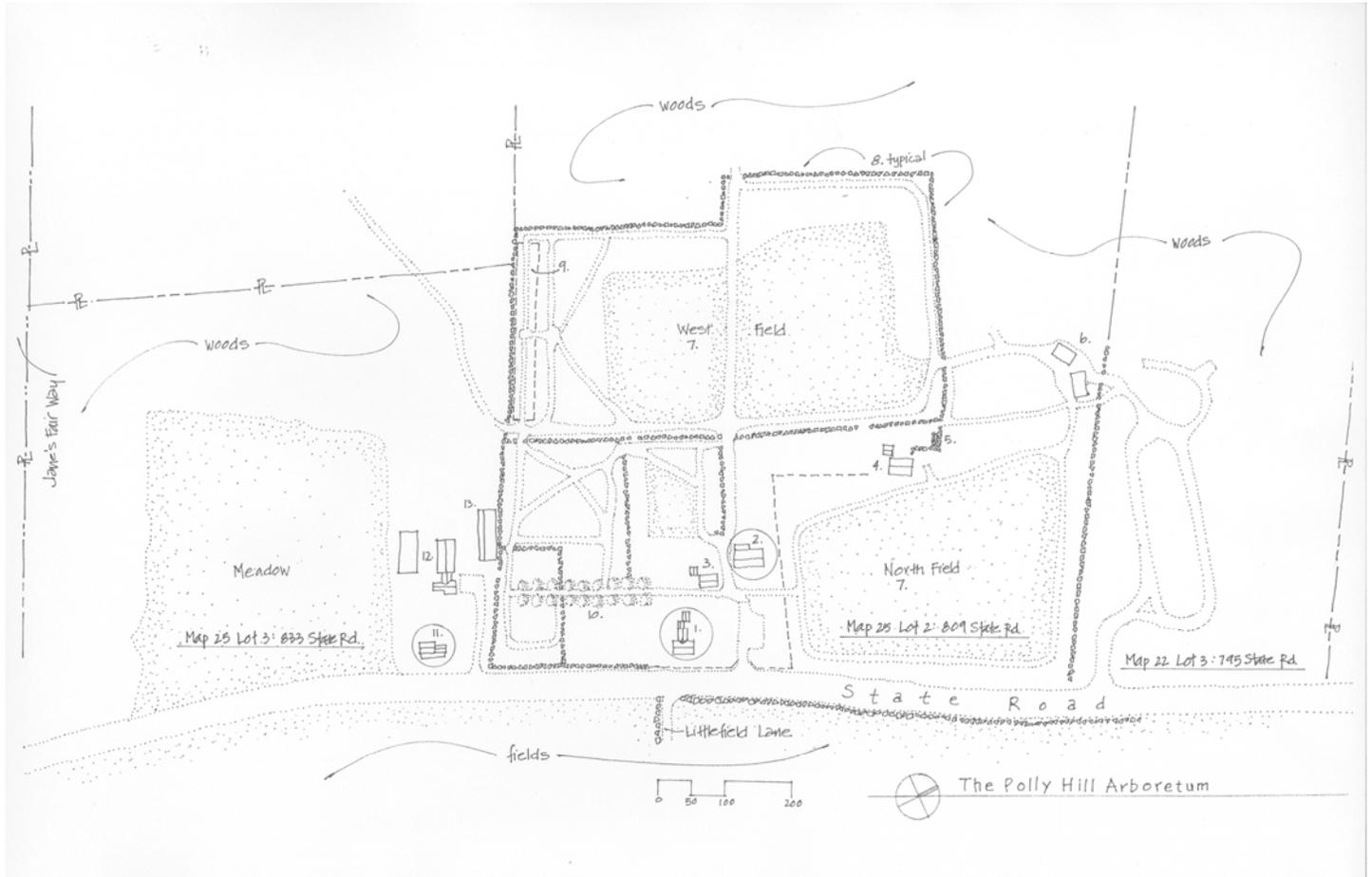
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

H	216-223; 906-910
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Sketch Map



**INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET**

WEST TISBURY POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

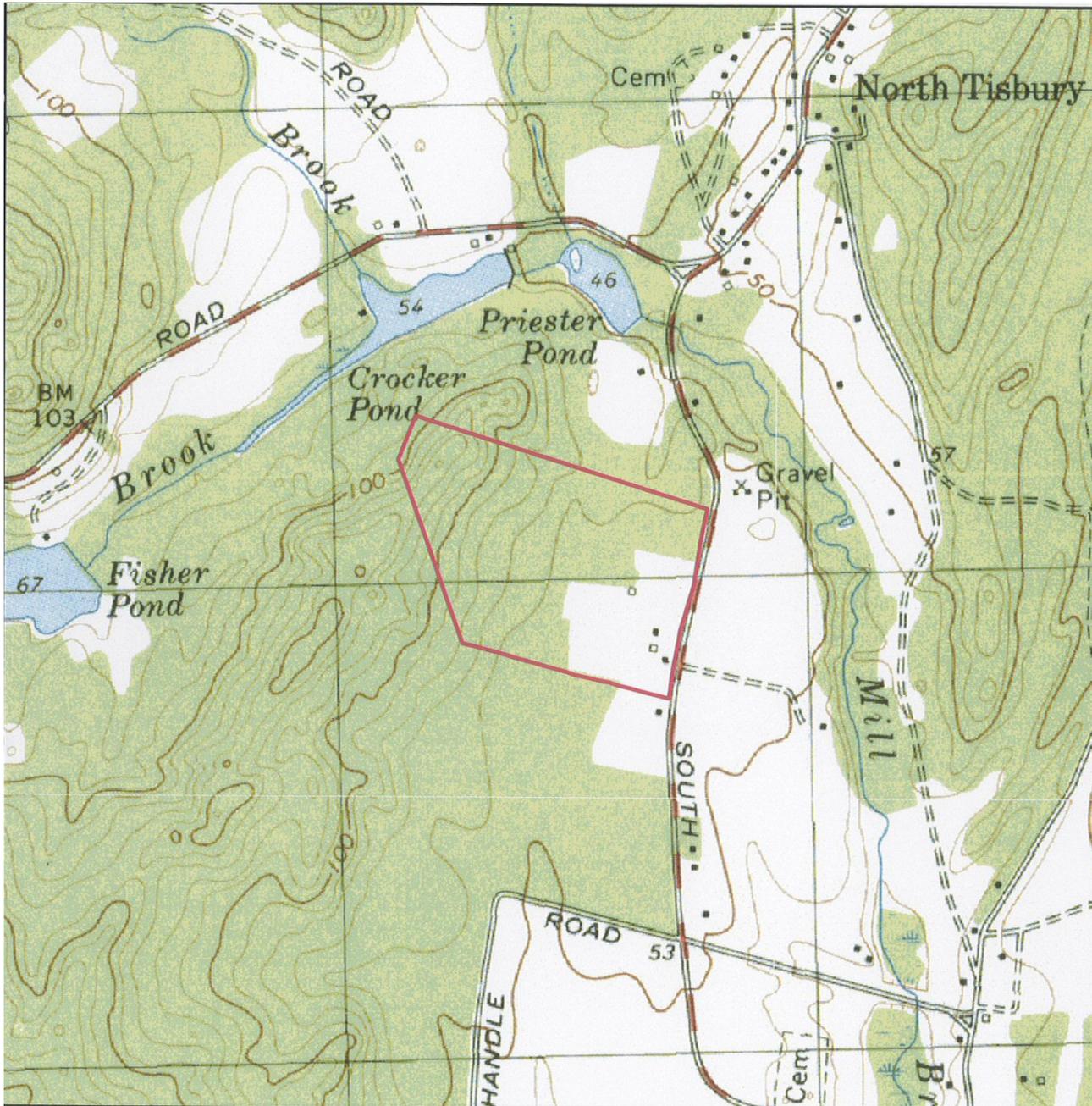
MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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H	216-223; 906-910
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**Topographic Map**



**INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET**

WEST TISBURY POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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**Photographs – Buildings and Landscape Features**



Photo #1

Aerial photo 1941



Photo #2  
Barnard Luce Homestead  
1940s

Map #1

**INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET**

WEST TISBURY POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

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Photo #3  
Barnard Luce Homestead  
2010  
(WTI.216)  
Map #1



Photo #4  
Cow Barn  
1920s  
  
Map #2

**INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET**

WEST TISBURY POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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H	216-223; 906-910
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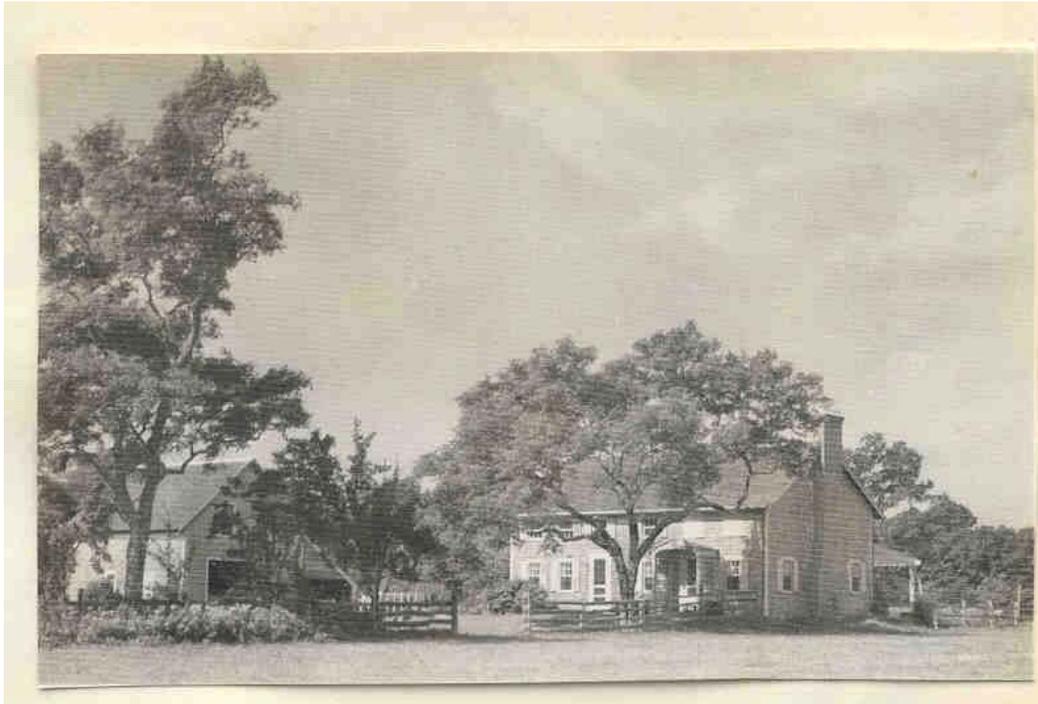


Photo #5  
Renovated Cowbarn  
1938

Map #2



Photo #6  
Cowbarn  
2010  
(WTI.217)  
Map #2

**INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET**

WEST TISBURY POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

H	216-223; 906-910
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Photo # 7  
"Gym"  
2010  
(WTI.218)  
Map # 3



Photo # 8  
Far Barn  
2010  
(WTI.219)  
Map #4

**INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET**

WEST TISBURY POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

H	216-223; 906-910
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Photo # 9  
Fireplace  
2010  
(WTI.906)  
Map #5



Photo #10  
Visitor Center  
2003  
(WTI.220)  
Map # 6

**INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET**

WEST TISBURY POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

H	216-223; 906-910
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Photo # 11  
Stonewalls  
(WTI.908)  
Map # 8



Photo #12  
Littlefield House  
2009  
(WTI.221)  
Map #11

**INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET**

WEST TISBURY POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

H	216-223; 906-910
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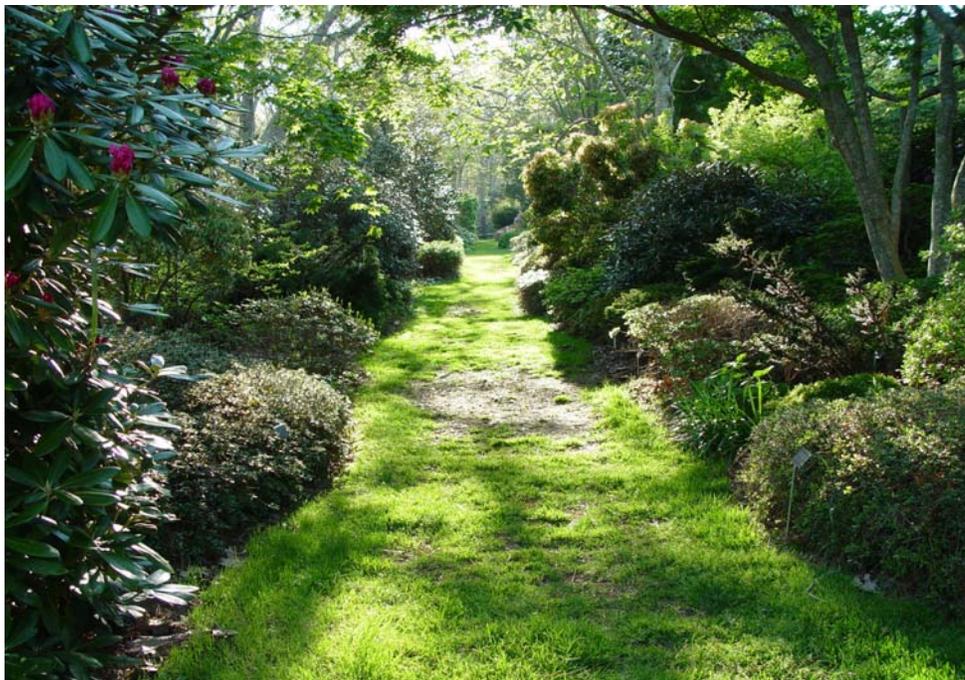


Photo # 13  
Playpen Garden  
(WTI.909)  
Map # 9



Photo # 14  
Dogwood allée  
(WTI.910)  
Map # 10

**INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET**

WEST TISBURY POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

H	216-223; 906-910
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Photo # 15  
Greenhouse  
2010  
(WTI.222)  
Map # 12



Photo # 16  
Littlefield Maintenance Building  
2010  
(WTI.223)  
Map # 13

**INVENTORY FORM A CONTINUATION SHEET**

WEST TISBURY POLLY HILL ARBORETUM

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Area Letter Form Nos.

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

H	216-223; 906-910
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**National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form**

Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible       Eligible **only** in a historic district  
 Contributing to a potential historic district       Potential historic district

Criteria:     **A**     **B**     **C**     **D**

Criteria Considerations:     **A**     **B**     **C**     **D**     **E**     **F**     **G**

Statement of Significance by Laura J. Kline and Virginia H. Adams, PAL, March 2010  
*The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.*

The Polly Hill Arboretum area at 809 State Road is recommended as eligible for listing as a historic district in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C at the local level in the areas of agriculture, conservation, and architecture. The property consists of 70 acres of rural farmland in West Tisbury operated as a public garden overlaid on the agricultural landscape with a significant collection of native and exotic plant species. Sixty acres of the land are protected from future development by a state-funded conservation restriction. The oldest building on the property is the Barnard Luce House, the homestead residence for the agricultural landscape dating to the mid- to late-eighteenth century and occupied by the Luce family until 1860. The well-preserved full Cape Cod dwelling has had some alterations for use by the Arboretum. Other structures on the property represent a continuum of land uses ranging from farming in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to a summer home for Polly Hill's family in the early twentieth century, to the horticultural and botanical laboratory established by Hill in 1958. Like much of West Tisbury, the development of this property in the twentieth century emphasized the agricultural and scientific value of the landscape in addition to its scenic qualities. The property possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association and meets National Register Criteria A and C. Further research will be necessary to complete the nomination.

# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

WEST TISBURY

809 State Road

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

H 216-223;  
906-910

**Addendum prepared by PAL, September 2009**

**Property Name:** Luce, Barnard House / Polly Hill Arboretum

**Map-Lot:** 25-02

Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The Polly Hill Arboretum is a 70-acre public garden that contains rare trees and shrubs from around the world. The historic buildings on the property consist of the Barnard Luce House, also known as the Homestead, a ca. 1670 Cape that is now the Arboretum's offices; the Cowbarn, a large one-and-one-half-story gable-roof barn that was converted to a house in the 1930s and now houses a horticultural library and an apartment for visiting professionals; and the Far Barn, a smaller one-and-one-half-story gable-roof barn building used for lectures and special events. Since the property was surveyed in 1986, additional windows have been added to the gable end of the Barnard Luce House and the front porch has been removed.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

The Polly Hill Arboretum was established in 1997 as a not-for-profit institution devoted to the cultivation and study of plants and the preservation of the landscape. Polly Hill (1907-2007) began the arboretum in 1958 after she and her husband, Julian, inherited the property from her parents, Margaret and Howard Butcher, Jr. Hill experimented with and successfully grew numerous plants that no one would have predicted could grow under the climatic conditions of Martha's Vineyard. She also selected superior forms of the plants she grew, gave them cultivar names, and made them available to the horticultural trade.

The Arboretum property was one of the 16 original 40-acre home lots created in West Tisbury in 1669. By 1674, Henry Luce had settled on the land and lived in the Homestead, which may have been constructed prior to his purchase. At one point in its history, the farm served as an inn for travelers making the long journey between Vineyard Haven and Aquinnah. Luce's descendants lived on the farm until 1850. The property then changed hands several times until Bartlett Smith purchased the farm and with his partner Albert Littlefield ran it as a sheep farm. Littlefield later married Smith's sister, eventually inheriting all of Smith's land. In 1926 the Littlefields sold 40 acres, including the Homestead and other farm buildings, to the Butchers, who used it as a summer home. Margaret Butcher gave it the name "Barnard's Inn Farm" and converted one of the old barns, known as the Cowbarn, into the family residence.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY AND/OR REFERENCES

Polly Hill Arboretum, "Evolution of the Arboretum," at <http://www.pollyhillarboretum.org/history/>, retrieved September 21, 2009.

RECEIVED

JAN 28 2010

MASS. HIST. COMM.

# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

WEST TISBURY

809 State Road

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

H 216-223;  
906-910

## Photographs



**INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET**

**WEST TISBURY**

**809 State Road**

**MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.

**H** 216-223;  
906-910



# INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

WEST TISBURY

833 State Road

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Area(s) Form No.  
H 221

**Addendum prepared by PAL, September 2009**

**Property Name:** Adams, Samual Washington House  
**Map-Lot:** 25-03.1

Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. *If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.*

## ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

There have been no significant changes to the property since the most recent inventory form was submitted.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

This property is now part of the Polly Hill Arboretum, a 70-acre public garden that contains rare trees and shrubs from around the world.

## Photograph



RECEIVED  
JAN 28 2010  
MASS. HIST. COMM.

Original yellow form: Eligibility file  
 Copies: Inventory form  
       Town file(w/corresp.)  
       Macris  
       NR director \_\_\_\_\_

Community: West Tisbury

**MHC OPINION: ELIGIBILITY FOR NATIONAL REGISTER**

Date Received: 3/9/11 (more info)

Date Reviewed: 3/23/11

Type:             Individual                    District (Attach map indicating boundaries)

Name: Polly Hill Arboretum, aka Barnard Luce Farm

Inventory Form: WTI.H

Address: 795-833 State Road

Requested by: Karin Stanley, West Tisbury Historical Commission

Action:    Honor    ITC            Grant            R & C            Other:

Agency:

Staff in charge of Review: BF

**INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES**

**DISTRICTS**

Eligible  
 Eligible, also in district  
 Eligible only in district  
 Ineligible  
 More information needed

Eligible  
 Ineligible  
 More information needed

**CRITERIA:**                    A                    B                    C                    D

**LEVEL:**                    Local                    State                    National

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** by Betsy Friedberg

The Polly Hill Arboretum is a 70-acre public garden established in 1958 on a property that had seen occupation for three centuries as, first, a farm, and then, a summer residence. The various uses of the property remain in evidence. While first settled ca. 1670 by Henry Luce, the present farmhouse is believed to have been built in two sections beginning ca. 1770 by Barnard Luce, who ran a tavern on this property. The house likely began as a half or three-quarter Cape, expanded to a full Cape after 1800, as evidenced by two distinct stone and granite block foundations. A rear ell may also date to the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The house has been renovated extensively over time, most recently in 1998 for use by the Arboretum; the cellar retains bases of two 19<sup>th</sup> century chimneys, though it is likely that the building at one time had a central chimney.

Other buildings on the property include the Far Barn, possibly built in two phases in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries; the Cowbarn, built in the 19<sup>th</sup> (?) century and renovated ca. 1926-1933 as a Colonial Revival-style dwelling; the Tool Shed, 19<sup>th</sup> century, renovated in the 1930s as a Gym; and the Samuel Washington House, a ¾ Cape built 1844 and associated with the Littlefield family whose parcel was added to the Polly Hill Arboretum in 2002. There are also several more

recent buildings, including a visitors' center (1998), greenhouses (2007), and maintenance building (2009).

Members of the Luce family farmed here until 1860. The property was used for sheep farming into the 1920s, first by the Luce family, eventually by the Smith and Littlefield families. Stone walls marking boundaries and animal enclosures survive to reflect the property's agricultural uses. In 1926, 40 acres that comprise the core of the Luce farmstead was sold to the Butcher family of Philadelphia for use as a summer home. Margaret Butcher started clearing more of the farmland through mowing and prescribed burning; she was also responsible for converting the former cow barn to residential use. The Butchers' daughter, Mary Louisa, also known as Polly Hill, was a horticulturalist who inherited the property in 1957. She was responsible for creating an arboretum on the property, experimenting with Japanese seeds and plants, evergreen and deciduous trees and shrubs, as well as native species. Polly Hill rebuilt toppled stone walls, established the Dogwood Allee in the 1960s and the so-called "Polly's Play Pen" garden in the 1970s; both are relatively small components in the overall landscape and though presently noncontributing because they are less than 50 years old, would be contributing once they have achieved that milestone. The Polly Hill Arboretum was formed in 1997 and continues as a public garden honoring the work of Polly Hill, who died in 2007.

The property retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Its buildings, structures, and landscape features together reflect the history and evolution of this property across three centuries of Vineyard history, from early farm to summer retreat to arboretum. The property fulfills Criteria A and C and is significant at the local level.