

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Railroad Borough Historic District

and/or common N/A

2. Location

street & number North, East, and South Main Streets N/A not for publication

city, town Railroad N/A vicinity of

state PA code 48 county York code 133

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple (see accompanying list)

street & number

city, town N/A vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. York County Courthouse

street & number 28 East Market Street

city, town York state PA

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title York County Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date November 1982 federal state county local

depository for survey records 1) PA Hist. & Mus. Comm. 2) Historic York, Inc. 3) York County Planning Commission
city, town 1) Harrisburg 2&3) York state PA

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Railroad Borough is a well-preserved example of a rail depot community of the 1840-1920 period. The town developed in an irregular fashion in two narrow, intersecting stream valleys, which are surrounded by wooded hills and open farmland. The building stock reflects the town's roles as a freight depot and manufacturing center, and reflects as well the continued importance of agriculture in the area. Stylistic influences include Greek Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne, generally applied to the standard vocabulary of Georgian forms. Some significant structures have been lost, but the borough still retains the atmosphere of a nineteenth century rail depot community. The district as outlined contains 55 acres. There are 60 major buildings within the district boundaries, of which 16 are significant, 38 are contributing, and six are intrusions.

Railroad Borough lies in two narrow stream valleys in the Piedmont Plateau region of southern York County. The large stream, the south branch of the Codorus Creek, flows north northwest through the borough, and is paralleled by the rail line. The smaller stream flows westward into the south branch from the eastern portion of the borough. Two roads parallel these streams. The north-south road leads to Glen Rock, two miles to the northwest, and New Freedom, one mile to the south. The other leads to Shrewsbury, one mile to the east.

The hills surrounding these narrow valleys stand in a relief of 200 to 250 feet. Railroad Borough's official bench mark is 741 feet above sea level. The highest elevation within the borough is 975 feet in the extreme northeast corner. Just to the east in Shrewsbury Borough the elevation tops 1040 feet, more than 600 feet above Center Square in York.

The majority of the area within the Railroad Borough limits, which encompasses .66 square miles, is composed of open farmland, which is, for the most part, not visible from the center of town because of the wooded hillsides. The area of the borough is slightly greater than nearby Glen Rock, which had a population of 1,662 in 1980. The population of Railroad Borough in 1980 was 272, and in census years at least, has never exceeded 310.

The building stock of Railroad Borough reflects the town's roles as a rail freight depot and manufacturing center, and reflects the continued importance of agriculture in the area as well. Some of the more important buildings directly related to the railroad and industry include a two and one half story store and commission house, a large, three story, stuccoed stone hotel, and a sprawling early twentieth century brick industrial complex.

The district presents a variety of very muted decorative features from various stylistic influences. These include attic frieze windows, dentiled cornices, and fret-corner block wooden lintels from the Greek Revival period, paired brackets and segmental arches from the Italianate period, and patterned gable-shingles and irregular roof-lines from the Queen Anne period. The architecture of Railroad Borough is not remarkable, however, for its stylistic flamboyance - it is characterized by its straightforwardness of detailing, practicality of design, and for its solidity. Of the forty-five significant and contributing dwellings included within the district, twenty-one are built of either brick or stone. Most of the others are frame, with a few log structures included as well.

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There are only seven intrusions within the district boundaries. Of these the most glaring is a concrete block service station at the intersection of East and North Main Streets. The other intrusions include a trailer and two ranch-style houses on South Main Street, a concrete block garage used for commercial purposes on Hill Street, a Cape Cod type dwelling on Shaub Road, and a recently completed pavillion and parking lot in the community park.

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 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 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-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates N/A Builder/Architect N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Railroad Borough historic district shows significance in the areas of architecture, industry, and transportation. The Borough's location on a major rail line within a mile of Shrewsbury, a previously established population center, caused a freight depot to be set up and allowed the establishment of major industries, which included a phosphate factory, a flavine mill, and a brewery. Railroad's remaining building stock, which includes a brick store and commission house, a sprawling factory complex, and a three story stone hotel reflects the town's role as a freight depot and manufacturing center during the 1840-1920 period. In addition, a few farmsteads occur within the district boundaries and reflect the continued importance of agriculture in the area during Railroad's period of industrial and commercial development. In more recent years Railroad Borough has declined along with the general decline of the rail system in America. This decline culminated in 1972 with the destruction of the rail line by Hurricane Agnes.* The town is no longer bustling, but still presents an air of encapsulated history.

In the early years of the nineteenth century, Philadelphia and Baltimore were at economic odds over the control of the vast Susquehanna Valley market. Baltimore interests, in an effort to increase their already substantial share of this market, had proposed the construction of a canal along the lower Susquehanna in the early 1820's. Finding this initiative blocked in the Pennsylvania legislature by Philadelphia interests and their allies, they proposed an alternative plan in 1827 in which a rail line was to be constructed northward into Pennsylvania. In February 1828, the Baltimore and Susquehanna Rail Road was incorporated by the Maryland legislature to build a line from Baltimore to the Mason-Dixon line. Work began in August 1829. The Pennsylvania legislature, however, was not so cooperative -- it was not until March 1832 that a bill chartering the York and Maryland Line Rail Road was passed. In August 1838, the line from York to Baltimore was opened. It was York County's first rail line and, because of the steep gradients it achieved, was considered an engineering marvel in its day.

South-central York County was a sparsely settled agrarian region in 1838. The only population center of any consequence in the area at a manageable distance from the new rail line was Shrewsbury, about one mile east of the railroad in Shrewsbury Township. Shrewsbury was a turnpike town, on the main road between York and Baltimore, which in the early nineteenth century developed as a mercantile and business center for the surrounding agrarian region. The town's proximity to the rail line allowed the establishment of a depot - Shrewsbury Station - which was incorporated as Railroad Borough in 1871.

* The rail line is currently in the process of being rebuilt.

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The completion of the rail line, logically, produced a decline in, or at best a levelling off of long distance traffic on the York and Baltimore Turnpike. Despite this, Shrewsbury was close enough to the rail line to share in the prosperity, and to take advantage of this, a turnpike was created between town and depot. Shrewsbury continued to be the religious, educational banking, mercantile, social, and artisans' center for the area, while Railroad Borough developed into a sort of manufacturing suburb, or "industrial park" of Shrewsbury.

The Railroad Borough area had been the site of grist mills for many years prior to the coming of the rail line. After 1838 and before 1860, the major businesses of the town, aside from its role as an important freight depot, were grist mills, bark mills, and a tannery. The 1860 to 1880 period in Railroad, in addition to the incorporation of the borough in 1871, saw the establishment of several larger industries. These included an extensive flavine mill, begun in 1869 by Klinefelter and Hablilton, a sizeable phosphate factory, established by G.P. Everhart before 1876, and a brewery, established by Frederick Helb in 1867, and capable of producing 800 barrels per year. Helb arrived in Baltimore from Germany in 1847, and came to Railroad in 1849 where he established a tannery. Over the next fifty years he became, with his sons, one of the foremost economic forces in Southern York County. In 1870 he established a distillery next to his brewery. This was capable of producing 500 barrels of apple brandy per season, and the brick vaulted cold cellars used in the process still stand. An additional Helb industry was begun in 1900 when Frederick Helb and his sons established the F. Helb and Sons Co., a furniture manufacturing concern. This became the Sieling Furniture Co. in 1905. The location of this factory in the southern part of the borough had been the site of a grist mill and distillery for many years. However, with the addition of a manufacturing plant, a small cluster of workers' houses sprang up along South Main Street. The Sieling plant was the borough's sole surviving industry in 1971.

Although the post-civil war period was prosperous for Railroad Borough, the growth of the town's population was stagnant, and that of Shrewsbury Borough was slowly but steadily declining. With the rise of Glen Rock, an important manufacturing center two miles to the northwest, and New Freedom, adjacent to Railroad Borough on the south, the Shrewsbury area was declining in relative importance during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. An additional factor in this relative decline was the completion of the Stewartstown Branch of the Northern Central Rail Road in 1885. The branch, which left the main line in New Freedom and ended seven miles to the east in Stewartstown, bypassed both Railroad and Shrewsbury and thus eliminated the need for goods moving to and from the Stewartstown area to seek out or pass through the depot at Railroad.

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Railroad Borough's building stock reflects the town's roles as a manufacturing center and freight depot, with few intrusions present. Despite the borough's obvious links to the outside world, the architecture of the district is not remarkable for its stylistic flamboyance. It is important, however, for its straightforwardness of detailing, practicality of design, and above all, for its solidity. Of the forty-five significant and contributing dwellings included within the district, twenty-one are built of either brick or stone. In addition, three of the most important remaining industrial and commercial structures are also brick: these are the store and commission house, the Sieling industrial complex, and the Helb brewery. Although some of the more substantial structures in the borough have been lost, e.g. the stone depot, Railroad Borough still preserves the aura of a prosperous rail depot community of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, albeit in a decayed and overly verdant condition.

Railroad Borough, not surprisingly, is a product of the rail age, and the decline of America's railroads over the last fifty years has been paralleled by the decline of Railroad Borough. The same economic forces which put Railroad Borough on the map and then contributed to its decline are today transforming the town's parent community, Shrewsbury, from a small, agrarian, mercantile and business center into an expressway bedroom community with subdivisions, shopping centers, fast food restaurants, and an industrial park. In a sense, these are the twentieth century equivalents of Railroad Borough. The transportation corridor in which Shrewsbury lies still connects the same places, but the method of transport has shifted from the railroad to Interstate 83 and the automobile, and rendered Railroad Borough an anachorism.

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Maps

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Small, D. & W. Wagner. Map of York and Adams Counties. NP, NP, 1821.

*Historical Society of York County.

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Beginning at a point on the W side of Hill St. and proceeding thence E across Hill St., along the N side of Helb St. and N around the corner of Shaub Rd. following the periphery of parcel 54 1075' to a point on the W side of Shaub Rd.; continuing thence ENE across Shaub Rd. and along the rears of parcels 70 & 71 150' to a point; thence SSE along the W boundary of parcel 73 145' to a point; thence ENE along the rear boundaries of parcels 73 & 74 255' to a point; thence SSE along the W boundary of parcel 76 150' to a point; thence ENE along the rear of parcel 76 75' to a point; thence NNW along the E boundary of parcel 76 395' to a point on the S side of E. Main St.

Continuing from this point SW along the S side of E. Main St. 200' to a point; thence across E. Main St. and along the E side of parcel 69 125' to a point; thence W along the N side of said parcel 375' to a point; thence S along the W side of parcel 69 125' to its intersection with the rear of parcel 66; thence W along the N boundary of parcels 66, & 65 160' to a point; thence N along the E boundary of parcel 64 40' to a point; thence W along the N boundary of parcel 64 50' to a point; thence WNW along the N boundaries of parcels 63, 62 & 61 220' to a point.

Continuing from this point W, cutting across parcel 90 210' to the easternmost corner of parcel 90B; thence NW along the NE border of parcel 90B 245' to a point; thence WSW 130' across the railroad tracks to a point on the W side of the railroad right-of-way; thence NW along said right-of-way 725' to a point at the line between parcels 90 and 81; thence SW along said boundary to a point on the E side of N. Main St., Rt. 616; thence SE along the E side of N. Main St. 335' to a point; thence SW across N. Main St. and along the W boundary of parcel 83 300' to a point; thence ENE along the S boundary of parcel 83 and across N. Main St. 320' to a point on the E side of N. Main St; thence S along the E side of N. Main St. 300' to a point; thence WSW across N. Main St. and along the N. boundary of parcel 88 185' to a point; thence S along the W boundary of parcel 88 175' to a point; thence E along the S boundary of parcel 88 and across S. Main St. 160' to a point on the E side of S Main St.

Continuing from this point S along the E side of S. Main St. 500' to a point; thence W across S. Main St. 50' to a point on the W side of S. Main St.; thence S along the W boundary of parcel 25 500' to a point; thence continuing SSW 300' along the rears of parcels 25 and 24 to a point. Thence NW 170' along the N boundary of parcel 23 170' to a point; thence SW along the rear of parcel 23 95' to a point; thence SW along the rear of parcel 22 100' to a point; thence SSE along the W side of parcel 22, across Spruce Rd. and along the rears of parcels 13 & 14 575' to a point; thence NNE 60' to a point; thence ESE along the rears of parcels 13, 12, and 11 140' to a point; thence SSW along the W side of parcel 10 60' to a point; thence ESE along the rears of parcels 10, 9 & 8 150' to a point; thence ENE along the rears of parcels 7 & 6 240' to a point on the W side of Rt. 616; thence NNE along the W side of Rt. 616 and across S. Main St. 180' to a point on the N side of S. Main St. and Kirshner Rd.

Continuing from this point E along Kirshner Rd. 70' to the W side of the railroad right-of-way; thence due N along the W side of the right-of-way 1400' to a point; thence E across the right-of-way and along the S boundary of parcel 36 400' to a point on the W side of Hill St.; thence N

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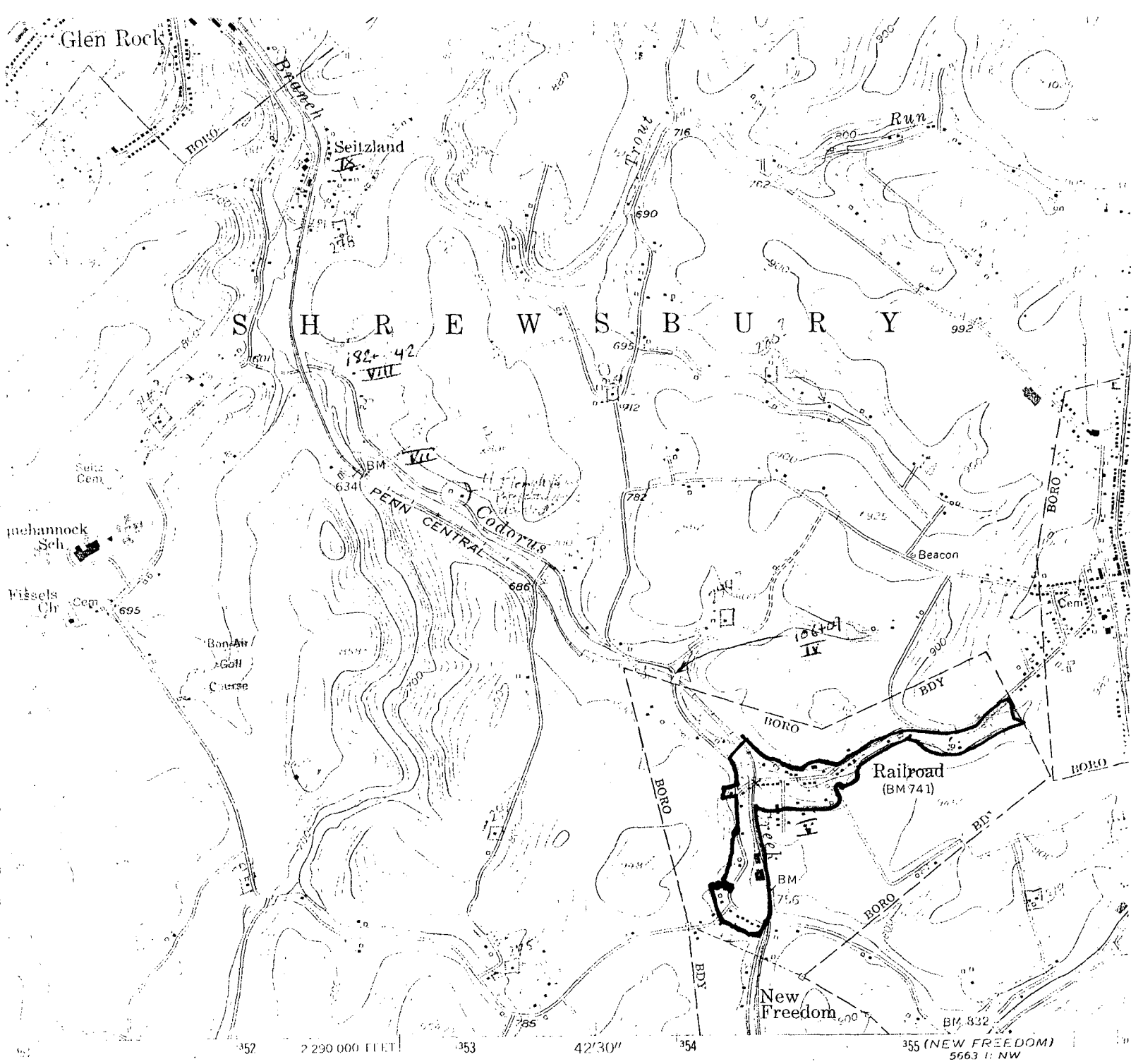
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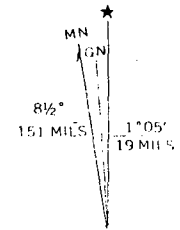
received

date entered

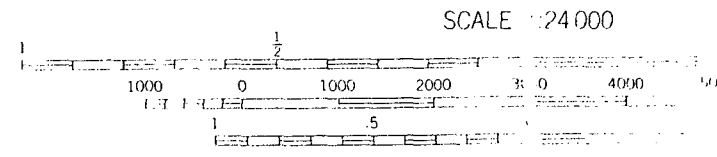
along the W side of Hill St. 340' to a point and the place of beginning.



Prepared by the Geological Survey
 by photogrammetric
 methods. Field check 1954
 using American datum
 and metric units system.
 U.S. Mer. star grid ticks.



UTM GRID AND 1973 MAGNETIC NORTH
 DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



SCALE 1:24 000

CONTOUR INTERVAL: 20 FEET
 DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

*Railroad Borough Historic District
 York County*

Glen Rock Quadrangle

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY
 FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON,
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS