Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
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DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC: Smithfield Lower Meetinghouse

AND/OR COMMON: Saylesville Meetinghouse* (preferred name)

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: Smithfield Avenue — __NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN: Lincoln — __ VICINITY OF — CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 1st -- Fernand J. St. Germain

STATE: Rhode Island — CODE: 44 — COUNTY: Providence — CODE: 007

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
__BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	__PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	__PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	__ENTERTAINMENT	X RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME: Providence Monthly Meeting, Society of Friends

STREET & NUMBER: 99 Morris Avenue

CITY, TOWN: Providence — __ VICINITY OF — STATE: Rhode Island

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Lincoln Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER: 100 Old River Road

CITY, TOWN: Lincoln — STATE: Rhode Island

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE: Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE: 1937 — X FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN: Washington — STATE: D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
__EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
X GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Lower Meetinghouse in Lincoln is set at the edge of the manufacturing village of Saylesville, which has grown up around the building since its construction. Located between Smithfield Avenue and the steep banks of Barney Pond, the meetinghouse is set about forty feet back from the street and faces south.

The meetinghouse consists of two sections, built over forty years apart; the original section (1704) now forms a small wing of the later section (c. 1745). The original meetinghouse is a tiny, almost square (21' by 25') single room of two bays on each facade, sheltered by a gable roof, and set upon a stone foundation over a full-height basement dug to accommodate a furnace. The building's walls are covered with clapboards -- those on the north wall are six inches wide; on the west and south walls the clapboards are feathered and lapped, and graduated in width from four to two inches. These narrower clapboards may have been applied when the c. 1745 meetinghouse was built, since they match the wall cover of the newer building. Wide sill and corner boards outline the building. The fenestration and double-hung sash of this older portion of the meetinghouse vary on each side, probably due to occasional updating and repair. On the north wall, the paired windows have 8/8 sash, flat surrounds, and a double cyma curve molding at the sill; on the west end, the two windows are surrounded by flat boards, with splayed lintels, and 6/6 sash; the frame of the single window on the south side matches that of the north, but the panes are 12/12.

The meetinghouse entrance is located at the southeast corner, where rough granite steps lead to a plank door surrounded by plain flat boards. Some of the original hardware remains on this door; long iron strap hinges still hold it; a thumb latch now opens the door, though the space cut for a large box lock is visible. The door itself is protected by a storm door of tongue-and-groove vertical siding.

The new meetinghouse, joined to the older at its east wall, is two stories with a gable roof. The building is rectangular (29' by 39') and, like its older counterpart, rests on a stone foundation. A full height basement has been excavated under one third of its length to accommodate the furnace. The exterior walls are covered by feathered and lapped clapboards, although the upper section of west side is shingled; wide sill and corner boards mark the edges of the building. Although the meetinghouse door was probably originally located in the east facade, facing the road, the entrance is now in the center of the south facade, where a five-panel door (a Victorian replacement) is surrounded by a simply-molded frame. The windows of this section are arranged symmetrically, two on each level, on the north and south facades, two on the first floor of the east side, and three on the second story. The windows are double hung, with 6/6 sash, flat surrounds and splayed lintels.

See Continuation Sheet 1

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On the interior of the meetinghouse, the newer building forms a single large room with a three-sided gallery, while the original section now forms an adjunct to the meeting room; it is used for smaller meetings food preparation, and the like. The two rooms are joined by a series of large interior windows which are now curtained, but were once closed with large plank panels mounted from above with iron strap hinges, and by a plank door with strap hinges and thumb latch.

Both sections of the meetinghouse have undergone alterations since their construction, but much remains to testify to their original character. In the original section, a small vestibule and a lavatory have been created by the construction of a wall across the interior, east to west. Modern kitchen apparatus has been installed in the west end of the room. A narrow chimney, now unused, has been substituted for a much larger chimney and fireplace which were probably located on the west wall. Within the meeting room proper, some of the heavy framing is still visible; while the beams are covered by a lowered ceiling, the posts, now cased, remain visible. The walls are covered with the same rough plaster which covers the ceiling; on the west and east ends, wide vertical planks panel the wall to a height of about four feet. On the north wall, these have been replaced by a new shallow bench whose back is made of similar horizontal planks.

In the new meetinghouse, the frame of heavy oak posts, beams and curved braces, is still visible -- hand hewn, mortised, pegged, and chamfered. The stair to the gallery, now built against the south wall and on the left as one enters, rises in a single run with winders. It has been enclosed by a wall of tongue-and-groove vertical boards which also forms a vestibule inside the entrance. The stairs may originally have been located in the northeast corner adjacent to the original door.

The walls of the new meetinghouse are covered with the same rough plaster as in the older section. A wainscot of tongue-and-groove vertical boards is now covered in some sections by large painted plywood sheets. Similar match-boarding covers the gallery breast, while above the breast, the gallery is now closed into a series of small rooms by plywood panels hinged from above. Heavy vertical planking covers the lower part of the gallery wall in a few places where it has not been replaced by new benches, plaster, or narrow vertical boards.

See Continuation Sheet 2

The windows of the meetinghouse are covered by modern shutters. On the first level, the windows are framed by wide heavy moldings, probably installed at the same time as the vertical boarding. On the upper level, the original narrow and unornamented frames remain.

A variety of nineteenth- and twentieth-century lighting fixtures exists in the meetinghouse. A heavy etched and cut glass chandelier hangs from the ceiling center above the gallery level. On the lower level, brass fixtures with white glass shades line the walls, and domed electric fixtures have been installed on alternating cross beams.

The meetinghouse benches are simple and lowbacked, painted white with curved and scrolled ends. These pews were not part of the original furniture, though they have been in place since at least 1909. The benches are presently arranged in a square; this pattern has been changed several times over the past two centuries, though a long bench has always occupied a low dais along the north wall, the "facing bench" which is typical of meetinghouse arrangement.

The meetinghouse is surrounded by wide lawns and old trees. Its cemetery (R. I. Historical Cemeteries, Lincoln #24 and #25), probably used since its earliest years, though only stones from the 1750s onward survive, is located on the western end of the property and is surrounded by chain-link fencing. A simple mounting stone is located at the eastern edge of the meetinghouse yard; it consists of a six-foot-long section of rough field stone propped against a shorter upright stone. A large carriage shed formerly located near the meetinghouse has been demolished.

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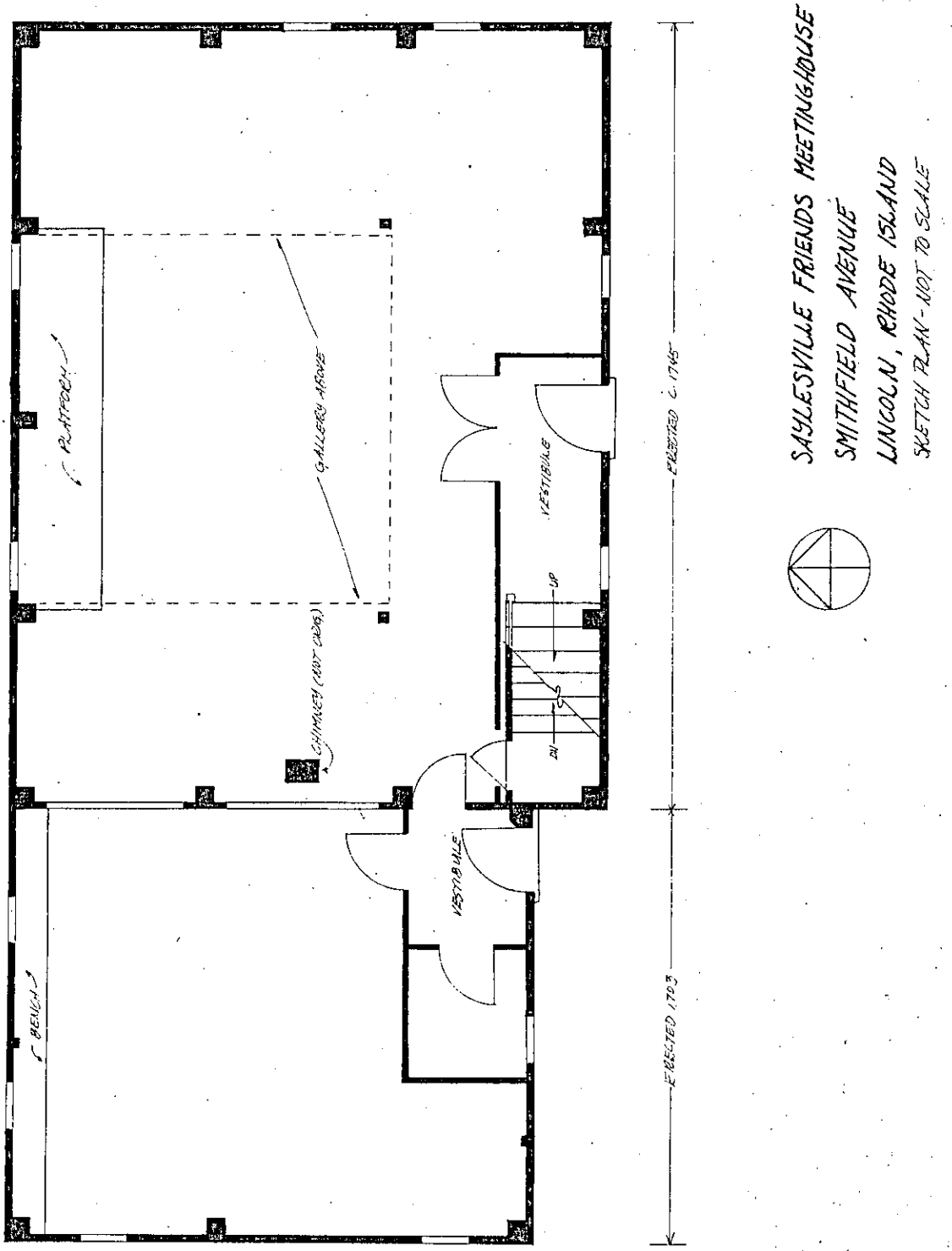
CONTINUATION SHEET 3 ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4



SAYLESVILLE FRIENDS MEETINGHOUSE
SMITHFIELD AVENUE
LINCOLN, RHODE ISLAND
SKETCH PLAN - NOT TO SCALE

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	X RELIGION	
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE	
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE	
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
X 1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER	
__1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION	
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		__INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1704, 1745 BUILDER/ARCHITECT unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Quaker Meetinghouse at Lincoln, Rhode Island, is significant for its antiquity, its architectural quality, and its role in the history of the spread of Quakerism in America.

The Society of Friends, harried as fanatics inimical to civil order from other New England colonies, were welcomed in Rhode Island as early as 1656, when banished Quakers from Massachusetts Bay settled on Aquidneck Island. In the following year, Quaker missionaries arrived on Aquidneck and many leading families of Newport, Rhode Island's pre-eminent settlement, prepared by the antinomian creed of their early years, became converts. By the 1660s monthly and yearly meetings had been organized here, the beginnings of the Quakers' elaborate institutional framework devised for social control and efficient operation. Throughout the 1670s and 1680s the Friendly sentiment flourished and spread throughout Rhode Island, even to the northern reaches of the Providence settlement; by 1691, when William Penn's proprietary charter for Pennsylvania was issued, over half the population of Rhode Island were of the Quaker persuasion and the colony was the center of Quaker life in North America. Friends dominated much of the colony's commercial and religious life throughout the early decades of the eighteenth century and, in addition, played a major role in its political life, providing an inordinate number of public officials to both the towns and the colony.

The growth of Quakerism in the lower Blackstone Valley, north of Roger Williams' settlement at Providence, proceeded somwhat more slowly, Quakers finding in these "North Woods" a relatively cooler atmosphere than Friends at Newport. While Newport was developing into an urban center by the turn of the seventeenth century, the Blackstone Valley remained a backwoods connected to Providence by a few roads and populated largely by farmers, rural artisans, and limestone miners scattered across the landscape or settled in tiny villages along highways such as the Great Road, laid out through this region in 1683. After the devastation of King Philip's War in the 1670s, however, the Quaker doctrine spread among these outlanders as well.

See Continuation Sheet 3

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First-day meetings among these rural Quakers were held in private houses until the construction in 1704 of the tiny, one-room meetinghouse which now forms the side wing of the Smithfield Lower Meetinghouse. This small meetinghouse was built adjacent to the Great Road on land belonging to Eleazer Arnold, a prosperous farmer and later a tavern-keeper, whose own house (c. 1687) still stands a scant quarter of a mile north of the meetinghouse. (The Eleazer Arnold House is a National Historic Landmark and a key building in the Great Road National Register Historic District). This first meetinghouse in the Blackstone Valley was constructed between June, 1703, and July, 1704; not until 1708, however, did Eleazer Arnold give the land in trust to the leading worthies of the meeting: Thomas Smith, Joseph Smith, Jr., Samuel Wilkinson, Jr., Samuel Comstock, Jr., Thomas Arnold, Jr., Eleazer Arnold, Jr., and Joseph Arnold, among them were two of his sons and his nephew.

This modest meetinghouse became the home of the Providence Monthly Meeting which was set off from the East Greenwich Meeting in 1718, and became the focus of Quaker life from that port town north to Massachusetts. The following year, a second meetinghouse was built for this monthly gathering in what is now Woonsocket; since this great northern region was set off from Providence in 1731 as the town of Smithfield, these two houses became known as the Upper and Lower Smithfield Meetinghouses.

Quakerism remained the dominant creed of the region well into the eighteenth century. Despite the availability of the Upper Meetinghouse, the Lower House was substantially enlarged c. 1745, expanding the building into a substantial place of worship, able to hold well over a hundred people on its first floor and in its gallery.

The leading families of the region maintained their adherence to Quaker ideals throughout the eighteenth century, but Quaker dominance of the religious life of the region diminished under the impact of the industrial revolution. The development of mill villages along the Blackstone and Moshassuck Rivers drew increasing numbers of residents committed to other creeds; Quakers, once a majority, have since the early nineteenth century been a minority in the region. Today, Quaker families belong to the Providence Monthly Meeting, though their Preparative Meetings are still held in the Lower Meetinghouse.

See Continuation Sheet 5

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The architectural quality of the Lower Meetinghouse is still informative not only of the nature of worship among eighteenth century Quakers and the longevity of their presence here, but also of the material achievements of the day and region. By way of contrast with the Aquidneck settlements, especially Newport, where the Quaker community was led by affluent shipholders, merchants, professionals, and artisans, the Smithfield Meeting was always a less urbane and more parochial Quaker center, populated by farmers, often substantial but rarely rich. To a Newport Friend, the Lower Meetinghouse would have seemed a very small affair indeed, the house of worship of sturdy farmers rather than Quaker "Grandees."

Despite the alterations to this house, it remains a vivid testimony to the ideals of the congregation which built it: simplicity in life and worship. Both on its exterior and its interior, the meetinghouse is a handsome building -- serene in its plainness, lacking in superfluity, fit for its purpose, its beauty arising not from the studied elegance of academic knowledge, but from the craft exhibited in its materials, such as the feathered clapboards and the chamfering of the beams.

Greene, Welcome Arnold. The Providence Plantations for 250 Years. Providence: J.A. and R.A. Reid, 1886.

James, Sydney. Colonial Rhode Island. New York: Charles Scribners' Sons, 1974.

Pawtucket Times, June 27, 1908, p. 7.

Pitman, H. Minot,"Some Arnolds of Smithfield, Rhode Island," in Rhode Island History, October, 1954, pp. 111-123.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bayles, Richard M. History of Providence County, Rhode Island, New York: W. W. Preston Company, 1891, Vol. II.

Bridenbaugh, Carl. Fat Mutton and Liberty of Conscience. New York: Atheneum, 1976.

See Continuation Sheet 6

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY about 3 acres

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	19	299400	4641360
B			
C			
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Plat 9, lots 141 and 142.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE: Pamela A. Kennedy, Senior Historical Preservation Planner

ORGANIZATION: R.I. Historical Preservation Commission

DATE: Sept. 16, 1978

STREET & NUMBER: 150 Benefit Street

TELEPHONE: 401-277-2678

CITY OR TOWN: Providence

STATE: Rhode Island

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE X 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE: State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE: September 29, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

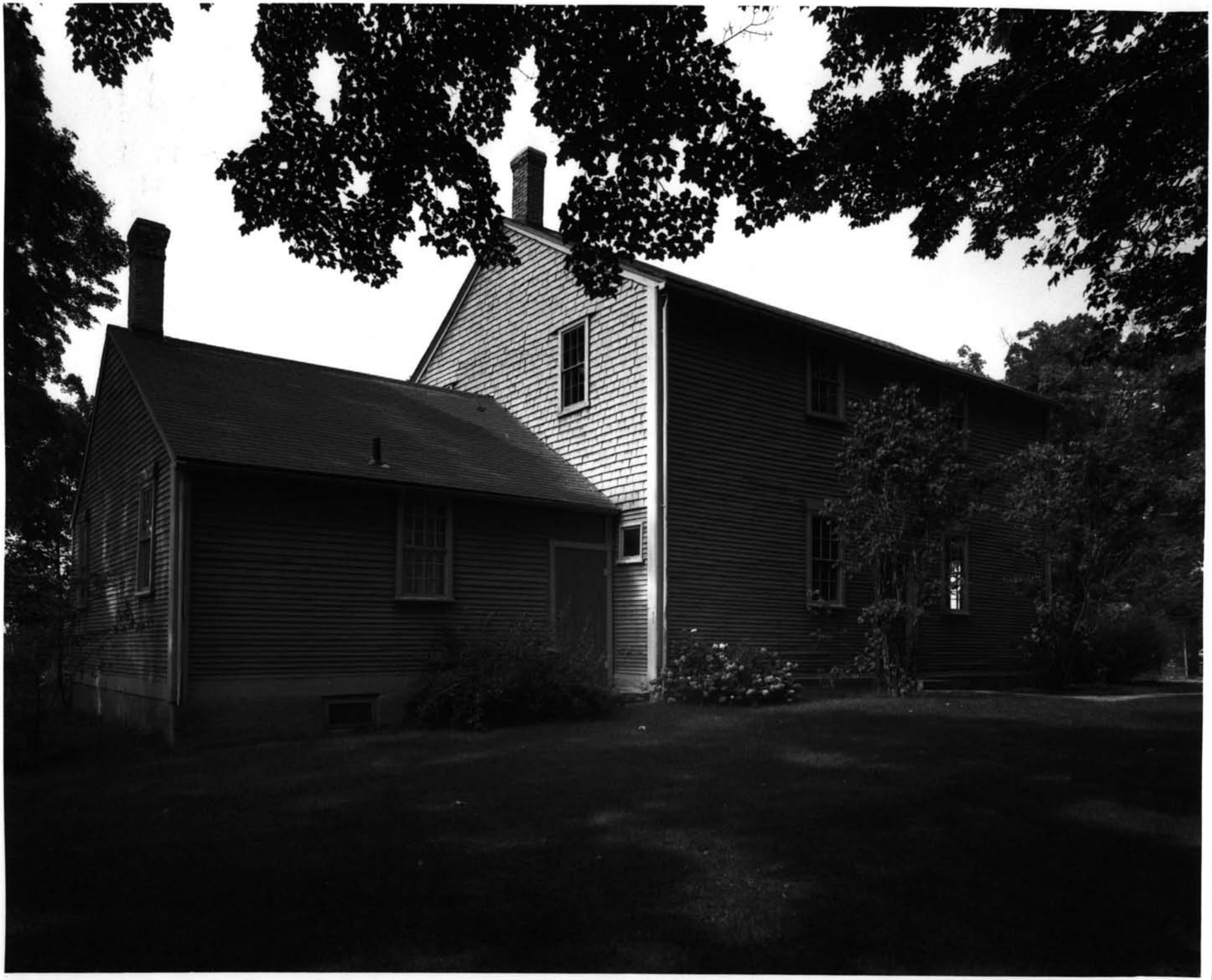
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



Smithfield Lower Meetinghouse
Smithfield Avenue
Lincoln, Rhode Island

Photograph by: Warren Jagger
Negative at: R.I. Historical Preservation Commission
150 Benefit St.
Providence, R.I.

Smithfield Lower Meetinghouse, seen from southwest;
1704 section on left, c. 1745 section on right.

Photograph #1

Smithfield Lower Meetinghouse
Smithfield Avenue
Lincoln, Rhode Island

Photograph by: Warren Jagger
Negative at: R.I. Historical Preservation Commission
150 Benefit St.
Providence, R.I.

Smithfield Lower Meetinghouse, seen from northwest corner of 1704 section and showing door of 1704 section, wall separating two sections, and interior of c. 1745 section.

Photograph #2

Smithfield Lower Meetinghouse
Smithfield Avenue
Lincoln, Rhode Island

Photograph by: Warren Jagger
Negative at: R.I. Historical Preservation Commission
150 Benefit St.
Providence, R.I.

Smithfield Lower Meetinghouse; west end of gallery (now closed), showing framing.

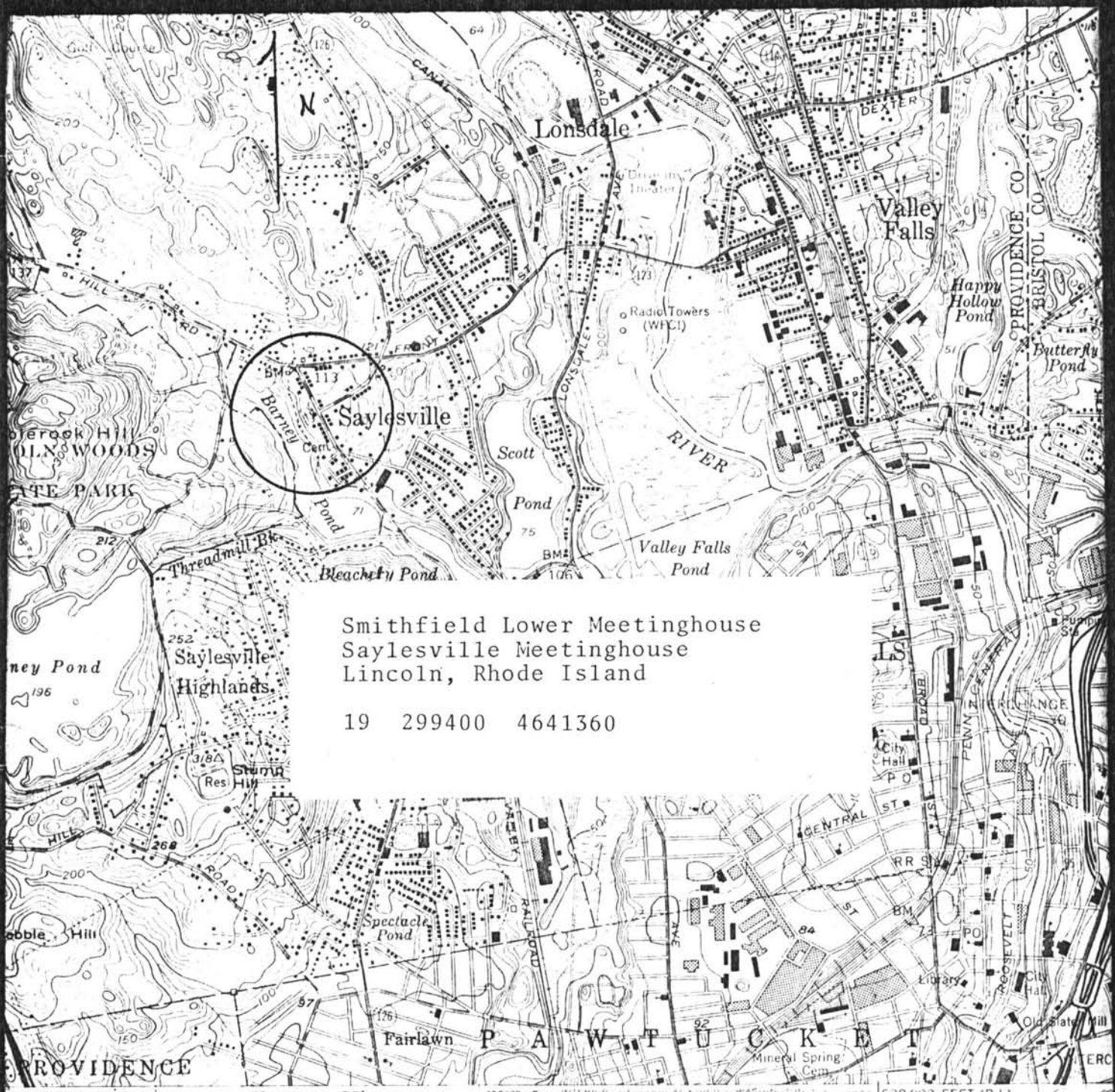
Photograph #4

Smithfield Lower Meetinghouse
Smithfield Avenue
Lincoln, Rhode Island

Photograph by: Warren Jagger
Negative at: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
150 Benefit St., Providence, R.I.

Smithfield Lower Meetinghouse, seen from southeast corner of c. 1745 section and showing framing and gallery (now closed off).

Photograph #3



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy duty — Light duty

Medium duty — Unimproved dirt

U. S. Route — State Route

Interstate Route

PAWTUCKET, R. I.-M.

N4152.5—W7122.5/7.5

1949

PHOTOREVISED 1970

AMS 6767 IV NW—SERIES V8

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

Notan