

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

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 Commodore Perry Farm

and/or common Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry Birthplace, "The Commodore"

2. Location

street & number 184 Post Road _____ not for publication

city, town South Kingstown N.A. vicinity of #2 - Hon. Claudine Schneider
congressional district

state Rhode Island code 44 county Washington code 009

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Mrs. Wisner Townsend

street & number 184 Post Road

city, town Wakefield N.A. vicinity of state Rhode Island 02880

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Town Clerk, South Kingstown Town Hall

street & number High Street

city, town Wakefield state Rhode Island 02880

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title See Continuation Sheet #1 has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town _____ state _____

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Historic American Buildings Survey
1956, 1959
Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.

Preliminary Survey Report--Town of South Kingstown
April 1975
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
Providence, R.I.

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Commodore Perry Farm encompasses approximately 250 acres of gently rolling fields and woodland on the west side of Post Road (U.S. Route 1). Approximately 21 acres immediately surrounding the house and outbuildings are included in this nomination. A pair of gravel drives, joined at each end, lead up from Post Road to the farm buildings, with a spur leading up to the north side of the house (see site plan). On a rise near the center of the property -- with a large old barn (now converted to a guest house), a caretaker's house, and other outbuildings nearby -- stands a picturesque one-and-one-half-story, gambrel-roof, shingle-clad dwelling with a massive stone center chimney, an atypical three-room plan in the main block, and a one-story, gable-roof ell complex extending northerly from its west side (Figures 1 and 2). The house has had a number of changes made to it over the years.

The age of the main block is uncertain, with either 1785 or 1815 given as the construction date in various available sources. The overall form and proportions of the gambrel-roof mass are more characteristic of earlier dwellings and would normally seem to indicate an early or mid-eighteenth-century date. Numerous changes in the building fabric, however -- such as replacement of the first-floor joists and subflooring, concealment of framing members, and removal of interior partitions -- make structural analysis difficult and inconclusive. By the time local antiquarians became interested in the Perry House in the early twentieth century, the original massive brick center chimney (visible in in old photos) had been removed, the interior had been altered, and the entire structure had fallen into a state of extreme disrepair. A rather freely conceived "restoration" executed in the 1920s was followed by another period of neglect and decay. After its acquisition by the present owner in 1944-45, the house was thoroughly rehabilitated once again and has since been well maintained.

The north and south sides of the main house each contain a central entrance flanked by asymmetrically spaced windows. The southern doorway, with a five-light transom, was originally the main entrance. The plain doorway on the north, oriented to a vehicle court in the angle between the house and the ell, and the gabled dormer breaking up through the eaves over this doorway are both additions made in the 1950s. The varied massing of the ell complex is the result of multiple additions over a hundred-year period. The portion immediately west of the main house, with its gable parallel to the gambrel, was added in the 1860s. The wing extending north from this earlier section, with its gable roofs perpendicular to the aforementioned one, was added in two stages: the part closest to the 1860s ell in the 1920s, the outer part in the 1950s. On the east side of this northerly wing there is a rear entrance into the 1920s section and a modern overhead door opening into a garage occupying part of the 1950s section. The most recent portion of the ell complex, abutting the main house on the south side of the 1860s ell, is a solarium completed about 1971, with window walls composed of sliding plate-glass doors and bubble sky lights in a shed roof formed by reconstructing and extending part of the old ell's gable roof.

(See Continuation Sheet # 2)

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The interior of the house has been considerably altered over the years. The first story of the original part of the house now comprises three relatively large rooms. The old main entrance on the south once opened into a small central stair hall containing a steep staircase with a plain, square newel and stick balusters. The partition between this hall and the southwest corner room was removed and a new neo-Colonial staircase was installed in the 1950s. The larger space is currently used as a library and informal sitting room with the staircase at the east end.

The present main (north) entrance opens into a handsome and spacious hall with paneled walls, a cupboard in the northwest corner, and a stone fireplace in the southeast corner with a bolection molding around the firebox (Figure 3). The wall paneling is composed of old doors and was installed, together with the corner cupboard and corner fireplace, during the 1920s restoration. At that time the room was used as a dining room. A window in the north wall was closed up and the new front doorway was cut in the 1950s. The hall connects to the library through a door next to the fireplace. A narrow space between these two rooms is divided into closets opening into each room and a powder room opening off the library.

East of the hall and library is a living room occupying the entire east end of the house (Figure 4). This space was probably once divided into two rooms, but the partition between has long since been removed. A large fireplace, added during the 1920s restoration, projects into the room at the center of the east side. It has a molded architrave firebox surround, a bulbous mantel shelf resembling a piece of an overscaled cyma recta molding, beveled overmantel and side panels, and cupboards on each side of the chimney mass opening sideways rather than forward. Some cased corner posts and a massive cased summer beam in this room are the only visible evidences of timber framing in the house.

West of the present entrance hall the space in the 1860s ell has been converted from a kitchen into a dining room. The fenestration has been changed by moving the two windows in the south wall closer together to make a double window and by cutting a window in the west wall and installing the sash from the window closed up in the entrance hall. From the dining room doors lead into the solarium on the south and the remainder of the ell complex on the north. The part of the ell adjacent to the dining room was added as a maid's room and bath in the 1920s and was converted in the 1950s into a large kitchen with a breakfast area. At that time an addition containing a large kitchen closet, a mudroom, and a garage was added off the north end of the new kitchen.

(See Continuation Sheet # 3)

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The second story of the house originally contained four small bedrooms opening off a walkway surrounding the staircase. One of the bedrooms was turned into a bathroom in the 1920s. This arrangement was changed during the 1950s renovations and the staircase now rises to a small hall with a bathroom straight ahead in the gabled dormer addition and one large bedroom on each side.

The barn, west of the house, comprises a tall one-and-one-half-story, gable-roof, early nineteenth-century main section with a lower one-and-one-half-story, gable-roof, twentieth-century addition to the south side (Figure 5). It has been renovated for residential purposes. Most of the main section is given over to a large all-purpose living and dining area with a two-story central space, open to the roof, flanked on the east and west by one-story spaces where the original animal stalls have been removed. The lofts above the old stall areas have been partitioned off from the central space and are furnished as bedrooms, reached by separate corner staircases leading up from the low side spaces. On the north side, filling the original large wagon doorway, are French doors flanked by relatively wide multi-pane sidelights, the former opening out onto a screened porch. In the main section the hewn post-and-beam structural members are left exposed with wall panels of rough plaster or planks between the timbers. The addition, once a milking shed, contains a kitchen adjacent to the main section, a bedroom beyond the kitchen at the south end, and a large dormitory-like bedroom above reached by a staircase running up from the kitchen.

The other buildings on the property include a one-story, gable-roof, shingle-clad caretaker's house, converted from an early twentieth-century garage by the present owners; a small, one-story, gable-roof, shingle-clad barn with exposed rafters articulating the eaves overhangs; a one-story, gable-roof, shingle-clad shed; a very small, gable-roof, board-and-batten structure resembling a springhouse or wellhouse; and a low, rectangular, gable-roof, wooden chicken house. These structures have no notable exterior trim or interior finish. A swimming pool with a screened pavilion on a terrace at its west end is located north of the driveway leading up to the north side of the main house.

A complex configuration of stone walls divides the grounds near the house and large barn (guest house) into lane, orchard, night pasture, and field. These walls, which contribute considerably to the scenic quality of the property, are important artifacts indicating previous use patterns of this old farm, a portion of which is still used to raise hay. About 1000 feet north of the main house, across a cleared field, is the old Perry family cemetery, a plot about fourteen feet square bounded by granite fence posts lacking their original iron rails. Most of the graves, following Quaker custom, are marked by uninscribed headstones and footstones of rough-hewn granite. The resting places of Oliver H. Perry's

(See Continuation Sheet #4).

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grandparents, Freeman and Mercy Perry, are the only ones marked with inscribed slate stones.

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/ 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Preservation, Folklore
Specific dates	ca 1785, ca 1815, 1929	Builder/Architect	Carl F. Hartmann (?)	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Commodore Perry Farm is a property of unusual significance. Its historical importance is largely symbolic, stemming primarily from its status as a landmark popularly associated with historical figures, as a widely recognized historical site, and, briefly, as an historical museum. Architecturally, the Perry farmhouse is less important for the quality and condition of the original building fabric than it is for the character of certain subsequent alterations which provide a fascinating historical perspective on architectural restoration standards of the early twentieth century. Although the Perry Farm is notable primarily as a memorial or commemorative monument, its connection with local tradition and elements of its architectural design invest it with its own particular significance.

The Commodore Perry Farm is generally perceived to be a fine example of Colonial domestic architecture historically noteworthy as the birthplace of Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, the commander responsible for the decisive American victory at the Battle of Lake Erie during the War of 1812, and possibly of his brother Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry, a distinguished naval officer best known for opening Japan to western trade in 1853-54. As discussed in the Description section above, the date of construction of the existing Perry farmhouse is in question, but it is most probably not colonial, and, with its numerous alterations, certainly cannot be characterized as an important surviving example of a standard Federal period farmhouse. Regarding its status as the birthplace of Perry, the available evidence tends to refute this contention. There is considerable disagreement in historical sources regarding the location of Perry's birth. The Rhode Island Historical Society, wishing to place a marker at the Perry birthplace, made a thorough study of the question in the 1920s and concluded that the property nominated herein, once the homestead farm of Oliver H. Perry's grandfather, Freeman Perry, was indeed the birthplace of Oliver. However, Oliver Perry was almost certainly not born in the present farmhouse. Though some sources maintain that Perry was born in this dwelling in 1785 soon after it was completed for his father, Captain Christopher R. Perry, certain nineteenth-century sources -- relying in part on the testimony of relatives and close friends and presumably more accurate -- state that Oliver himself or his father built the present house about 1815 on the site of Freeman Perry's dilapidated old "mansion house" of 1743, which had been Oliver's actual birthplace and which was torn down to permit construction of the existing house. The noted Providence architect and antiquarian John Hutchins Cady examined the farmhouse in the 1920s and dated it in the

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early nineteenth century, lending credence to the latter story. Thus Oliver was probably born on the property but not in the house now standing. Matthew Perry was almost certainly born in Newport, not on the Perry Farm.

In spite of these facts, a considerable oral, written, and even graphic tradition has grown around the Perry Farm, and specifically the farmhouse, identifying it intimately with Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry. After his victory at Lake Erie, Perry became one of the most celebrated heroes of nineteenth-century America. He was lionized in articles and books, and his untimely death at age 34 in 1819 only seems to have increased public admiration and esteem for him. A woodcut of the present Perry farmhouse was included in Lossing's Field Book of the War of 1812 (1868; see photo number 6) as "the birthplace of Oliver Hazard Perry" and since then the picturesque little gambrel-roof dwelling has been so pictured in innumerable publications, souvenir prints and photos, and postcards.

As might be expected the Commodore's fame had a special impact on his home town and a considerable body of local tradition developed concerning him, perhaps exacerbated by a regional peculiarity. South Kingstown lies in what is commonly known in Rhode Island as South County. The South County, corresponding roughly to what is officially designated Washington County, is not a corporate entity devised for political admiration, but exists extralegally in the perception of Rhode Island residents as an area defined by its environmental character and historical and cultural traditions. More than elsewhere in the state, local history has been an integral part of the popular culture of South County and has spawned a pervasive, rather nostalgic, anecdotal historical tradition -- transmitted in both oral and written form -- based in large part on intimate personal recollections of personalities and places. This rich body of folklore and legend is unique in Rhode Island and has an almost mythic significance. The tales long in circulation about Perry and the Perry Farm place the property squarely within this tradition and make it a South County landmark of major literary and cultural importance.

The Perry Farm's significance to the community is indicated by intermittent attempts to insure its preservation. By the time Oliver H. Perry reached adulthood, parts of Freeman Perry's homestead farm had been set off or sold off to various descendants, and a large parcel was put up for auction to pay debts of Freeman's estate in 1814. Oliver purchased this latter parcel and added it to two other parcels from the old farm (one acquired previously and one subsequently) to form a tract of about 162 acres surrounding the present farmhouse. This seems to have been motivated by a conscious effort to keep "the homestead" in the family. In 1824 Perry's widow Elizabeth C. Perry sold the farm to her uncle Christopher G. Champlin, who later sold it out of the family.

(See Continuation Sheet # 6)

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In 1865, George Tiffany of New York, a son-in-law of Matthew C. Perry, purchased the farm, motivated by the fact that it had been the home of his wife's ancestors. Thus the property returned to the possession of Perry descendants. It was rented out to tenants, however, and by the early twentieth century had fallen into a state of terrible disrepair after undergoing destructive renovations.

Local historical and patriotic organizations called for preservation and restoration of the Perry house as a memorial, preferably under the auspices of the state. In 1929 Mayor Mortimer A. Sullivan of Newport, in an address to the Rhode Island Historical Association, spoke of the need to preserve memorials and landmarks to foster patriotism and specifically called upon the state to purchase the Perry Farm and turn it into a "historic shrine" to Oliver Perry. That same year Mrs. Perry Tiffany, widow of George Tiffany's son and then owner of the Perry Farm, had the old farmhouse rehabilitated under the supervision of her brother-in-law, retired U.S. Army Colonel Carl F. Hartmann. Mrs. Tiffany, while using it also as a country retreat, opened the house to the public as a museum in honor of both Oliver and Matthew Perry, with memorabilia relating to the two men. At the time the work executed on the house -- including the reconstruction of the missing center chimney, the wall paneling of old doors in the then dining room (present entrance hall), and the neo-Georgian chimney piece in the living room -- was referred to as "restoration," and contemporary accounts comment on "the particular care to preserve the simplicity and dignity" of the old house and the picturesque and thoroughly "colonial" ambience of its setting. The Farm still exhibits much of the character it had back when it was the "Commodore Perry Memorial." The freely handled "restoration" of this property, an isolated monument associated with a person of exceptional importance, for use as a house museum serves as a classic illustrative example of the most common early twentieth-century approach to historical preservation.

In 1936, a delegation from Japan visited the Perry Farm and planted several flowering cherry trees in memory of Matthew C. Perry. This ceremony, enacted at a location at best only occasionally visited by Matthew, if at all, attests to the substantial symbolic importance of this property's connection to the Perry family.

By the late 1930s Mrs. Tiffany had apparently lost interest in her late husband's family homestead. The property, which had been mortgaged to the Wakefield Trust Company for a decade, was conveyed to Mrs. Tiffany's sister, Mrs. Carl Hartmann. Upon Mrs. Hartmann's death in 1943 Wakefield Trust took title and sold the farm to Rowland Hazard of South Kingstown. Maintenance on the house was apparently deferred during these years. The farm was acquired by the present owner and her husband for use as a country house in 1944-45. Since then the farmhouse has been repaired

(See Continuation Sheet # 7)

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and somewhat altered over the years (most extensively in 1955; N.J. Senesey, architect) but though these changes detract somewhat from the earlier fabric of the house, they do not eradicate the character of the earlier work. Today the Perry Farm stands as an important local landmark with symbolic, quasi-mythical associations with Oliver Hazard Perry which give it an unusual but real historical significance.

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Field, Edward, State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations at the End of the Century: A History (3 vols., Boston and Syracuse: 1902) II, pp. 618, 622.

Land Evidence Records, Town of South Kingstown (unpublished; deed transcripts by Marjorie Schunke, in possession of Mrs. Wisner Townsend).

Lossing, Benson J., The Pictorial Field-Book of the War of 1812 (New York: 1868) p. 521.

Narragansett Times, 8 February 1929, p. 4.
26 February 1929, p. 3.
1 March 1929, Supplement (n.p.).
28 June 1929, p. 4.
5 July 1929, p. 1.

New York Times, 17 March 1929, sec. 3, p. 1.
27 June 1929, p. 28.

Page, Charles (unpublished thesis on history and architectural design of Commodore Perry farmhouse, Yale University, no date; photocopy in possession of Mrs. Wisner Townsend).

Providence Evening Bulletin, 29 June 1926, p. 2.

Providence Journal, 21 January 1906, p. 30.
25 February 1929, p. 28.
30 June 1929, p. 5.

Providence Magazine, XXXVIII (September 1927) pp. 438, 452.

Rhode Island Historical Society Collections, XX, 4 (October 1927), pp. 113-14.

Rhode Island Historical Society, Graphics Collection (old photographs and postcards of Perry Farm).

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The boundaries have been drawn to include the Commodore Perry farmhouse and all outbuildings described in section 7, together with the cleared land visible from the farm complex. At the time the Commodore Perry farmhouse served as a museum in the early twentieth century -- one of its periods of major significance -- its surroundings were regarded as an element which contributed substantially to the property's "colonial" ambience and historicity (see continuation sheet # 6, second paragraph). The visual character of the land visible from the farm buildings, with its field, pasture, and woodland crisscrossed by stone walls and fences, is an important integral feature of this cultural resource, and the land has therefore been included in the nomination. The line segments AB and BC have been drawn to follow a boundary between the hay fields adjoining the house and a wedge-shaped field to the north known as the "pie lot." The "pie lot" was acquired by the present owners and is thus not historically associated with the Perry Farm; it is also visually separated from the hay fields by a hedgerow. The nominated property has been extended to line segment HA to encompass the limit of field visible from the house and also to include the old Perry family cemetery, located just beyond a small pond or bog, in a thicket of trees between two areas of cleared field. The line segment DE has been drawn to include outbuildings in the wooded land south of the drive through the farm (see site plan).

9. Major Bibliographical References

Dorr Obituary Scrapbooks (unpublished, at R.I. Historical Society) I,
p. 122; XI, p. 150.

(See Continuation Sheet # 8)

10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property approximately 21 acres

Quadrangle name Kingston

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1,9	28,8	6,2,0	4,5	8,8	4,0,0
Zone	Easting		Northing		

B

1,9	28,8	5,6,0	4,5	8,8	3,1,0
Zone	Easting		Northing		

C

1,9	28,8	6,4,0	4,5	8,8	2,1,0
Zone	Easting		Northing		

D

1,9	28,8	5,3,0	4,5	8,8	0,4,0
Zone	Easting		Northing		

E

1,9	28,8	3,2,0	4,5	8,8	0,4,0
Zone	Easting		Northing		

F

1,9	28,8	2,9,0	4,5	8,8	2,0,0
Zone	Easting		Northing		

G

1,9	28,8	3,9,0	4,5	8,8	2,0,0
Zone	Easting		Northing		

H

1,9	28,8	5,2,0	4,5	8,8	4,7,0
Zone	Easting		Northing		

Verbal boundary description and justification

The boundary of the nominated property is delineated by the straight-sided polygon whose vertices are marked and situated as listed above.

(See Continuation Sheet #9)

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

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert O. Jones, Jr., Senior Historic Preservation Planner

organization R.I. Historical Preservation Comm. date May, 1982

street & number 150 Benefit Street telephone 401-277-2678

city or town Providence, state Rhode Island 02903

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Robert O. Jones, Jr.*

title _____ date _____

For NPS use only

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

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

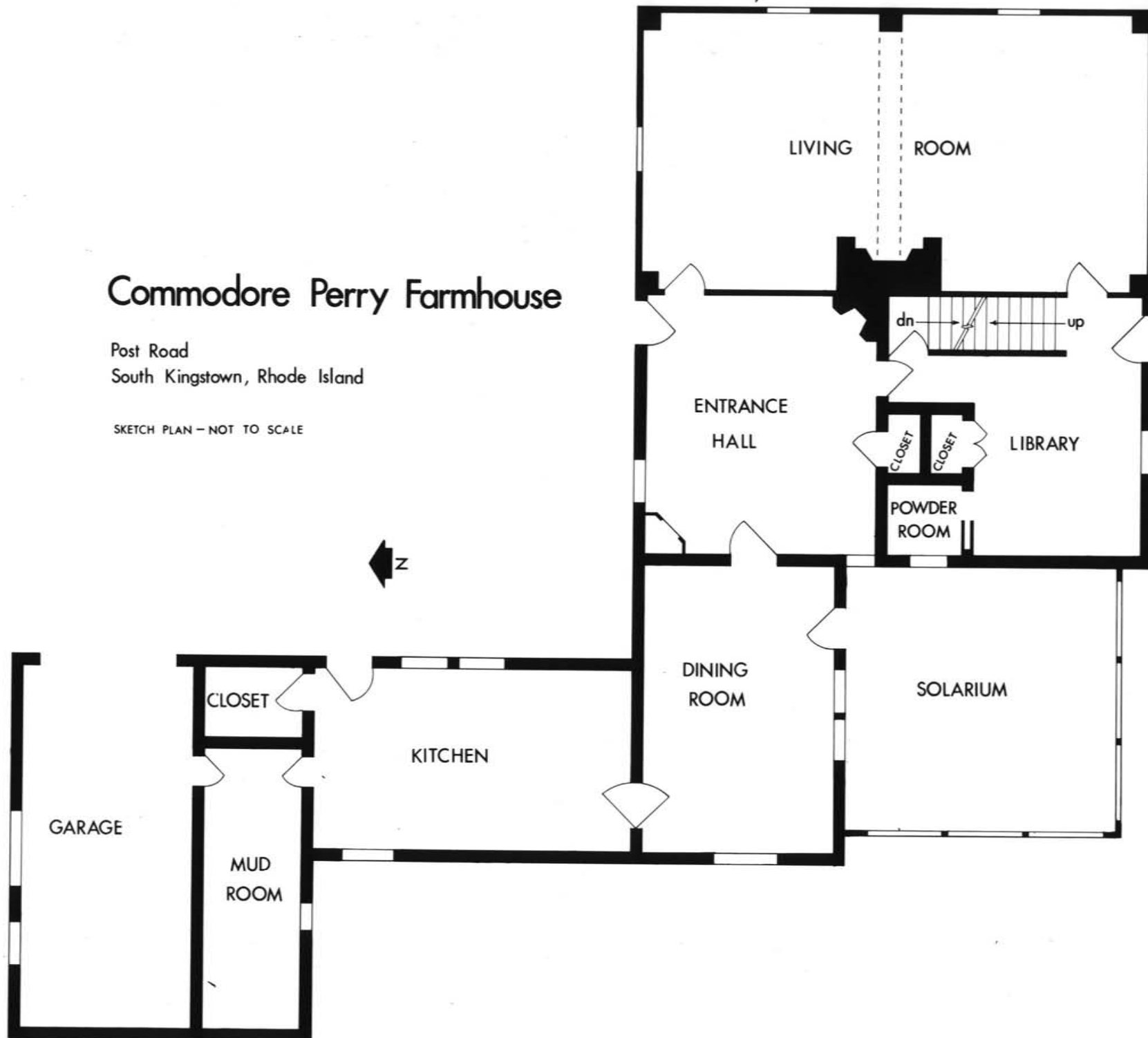
date _____

Chief of Registration

Commodore Perry Farmhouse

Post Road
South Kingstown, Rhode Island

SKETCH PLAN - NOT TO SCALE

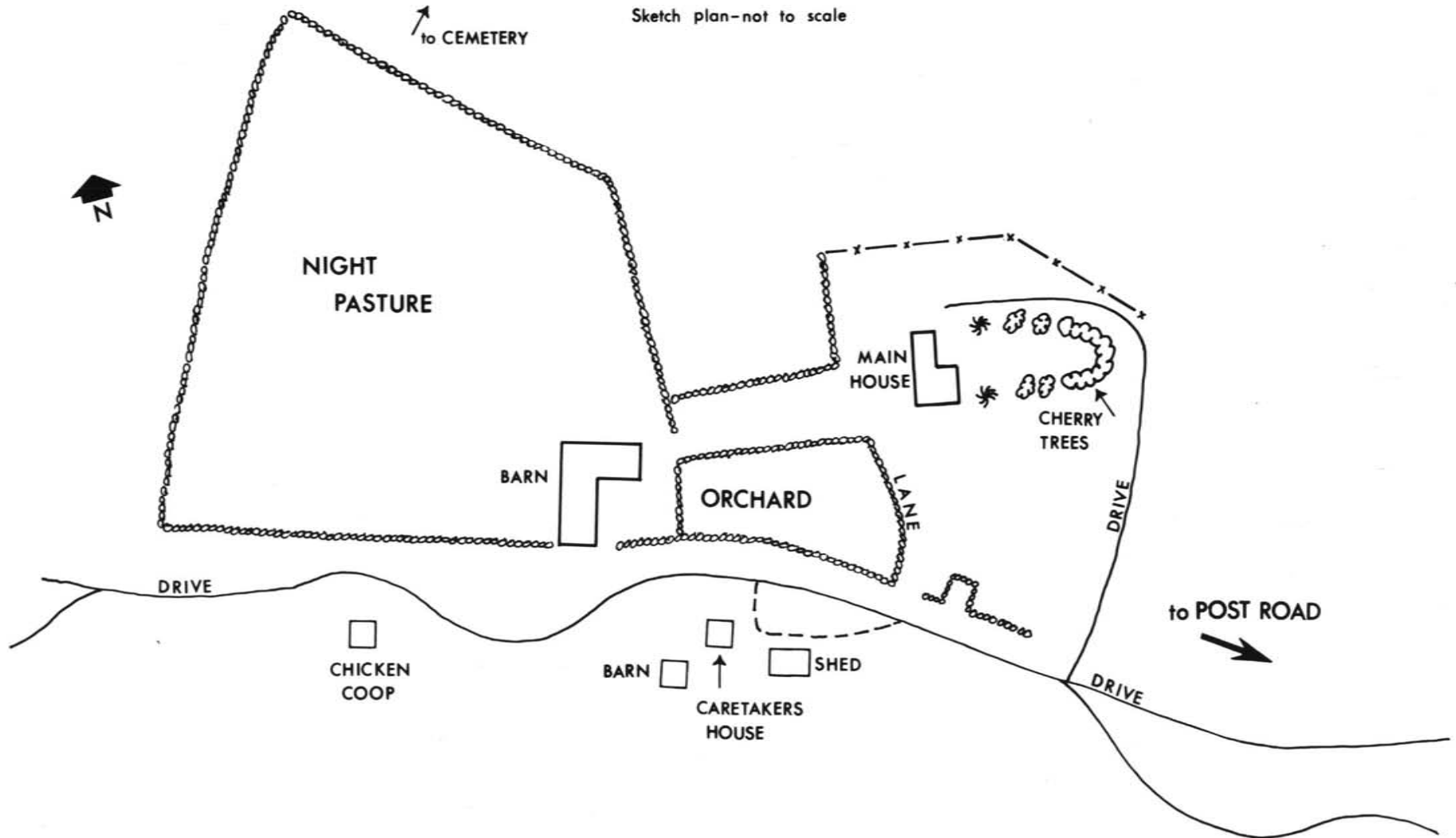


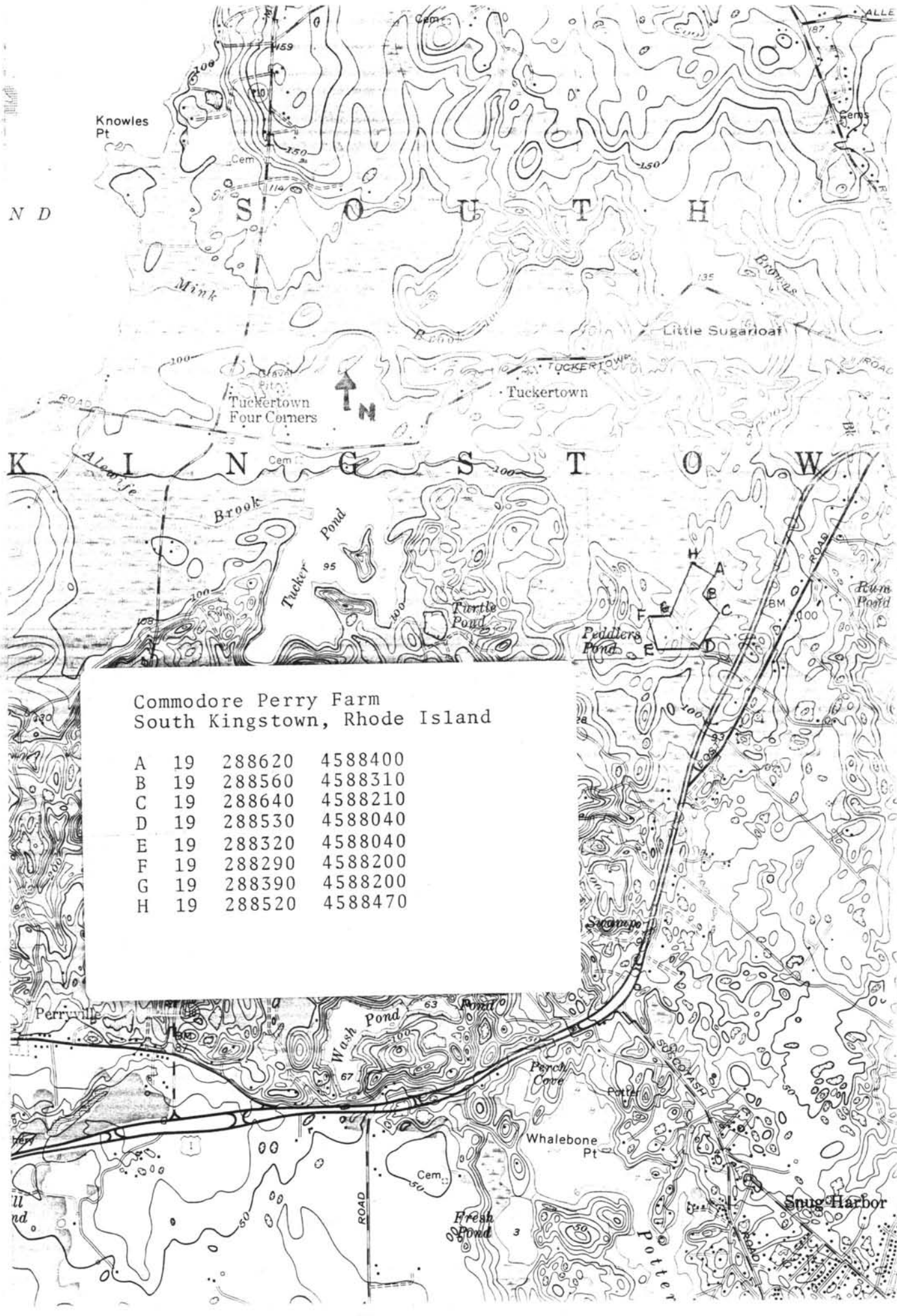
Commodore Perry Farm

Post Road

South Kingstown, Rhode Island

Sketch plan-not to scale





Commodore Perry Farm
 South Kingstown, Rhode Island

A	19	288620	4588400
B	19	288560	4588310
C	19	288640	4588210
D	19	288530	4588040
E	19	288320	4588040
F	19	288290	4588200
G	19	288390	4588200
H	19	288520	4588470



COMMODORE PERRY FARM
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, R.I.

Photographer: Warren Jagger

Date: April 1982

Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical
Preservation Commission
150 Benefit Street
Providence, RI 02903

View of the interior of the present entrance hall,
facing southeasterly.

Photo #3



COMMODORE PERRY FARM
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, R.I.

Photographer: Warren Jagger
Date: April 1982
Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical
Preservation Commission
150 Benefit Street
Providence, RI 02903

View of the interior of the living room, facing
southwesterly.

Photo #4



COMMODORE PERRY FARM
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, R.I.

Photographer: Warren Jagger
Date: April 1982
Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical
Preservation Commission
150 Benefit Street
Providence, RI 02903

View of the main house facing southwesterly.

Photo #2



COMMODORE PERRY FARM
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, R.I.

Photographer: Warren Jagger

Date: April 1982

Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical
Preservation Commission
150 Benefit Street
Providence, RI 02903

View of the main house facing northwesterly.

Photo #1



COMMODORE PERRY FARM
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, R.I.

Photographer: Warren Jagger
Date: April 1982
Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical
Preservation Commission
150 Benefit Street
Providence, RI 02903

View of the large barn, now a guest house, facing
northwesterly.

Photo #5



OLIVER H. PERRY.¹

As the dinner-hour would occur at the probable time of action, the thoughtful Perry ordered refreshments to be distributed. The decks were then wetted and sprinkled with sand so that feet should not slip when blood should begin to flow. Then every man was placed in proper position. As the squadron moved slowly and silently toward the enemy, with a gentle breeze, at the rate of less than three knots, the *Niagara*, Captain Elliott, leading the van, it was discovered that Barclay had made a disposition of his force that required a change in Perry's prescribed order of battle. It was instantly made, and the American squadron moved to the attack in the order best calculated to cope with the enemy. Barclay's vessels were near together. The flag-ship *Detroit*,

¹ Oliver Hazard Perry was born in South Kingston, Rhode Island, on the 23d of August, 1785. His father was then in the naval service of the United States. He entered the navy as midshipman at the age of fifteen years, on board the sloop-of-war *General Greene*, when war with France seemed inevitable. He first saw active service before Tripoli, in the squadron of Commodore Preble. He was commissioned a lieutenant in 1810, and placed in command of the schooner *Revenge*, attached to Commodore Rodgers's squadron in Long Island Sound. She was wrecked, but his conduct in saving public property was highly applauded. Early in 1812 he was placed in command of a flotilla of gun-boats in Newport Harbor. After his victorious battle on Lake Erie in 1813, he was promoted to post-captain, and at the close of the war he was placed in command of the *Java*, 44, a first-class frigate, and sailed with Decatur for the Mediterranean Sea.



VIEW OF PERRY'S BIRTH-PLACE.

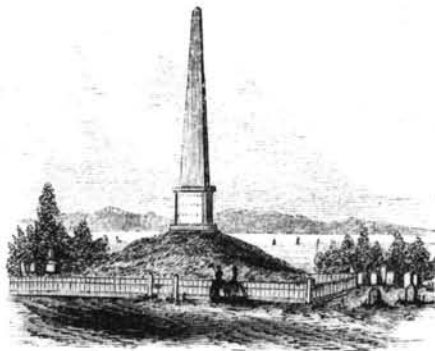
On his return, while his vessel was lying in Newport Harbor, in mid-winter, a fearful storm arose. He heard of the wreck of a merchant vessel upon a reef six miles distant. He immediately manned his barge and said to his crew, "Come, my boys, we are going to the relief of shipwrecked seamen; pull away!" He rescued eleven almost exhausted seamen from death.

On account of piracies in the West Indies, the United States government determined to send a little squadron there for the protection of American commerce. Perry was assigned to the command of it, and in 1819 he sailed in the *John Adams*, accompanied by the *Nonsuch*. In August he was attacked by the yellow fever, and on his

birthday (August 23d) he expired, at the age of thirty-four years. He was buried at Port Spain, Trinidad, with military honors. His death produced a most profound sensation throughout the United States, for it was regarded as a great public calamity. Tributes of national grief were displayed, and the Congress of the United States made a liberal provision for his family, and his mother, who was dependent on him for support. In 1826 his remains were conveyed from Trinidad to Newport in the sloop-of-war *Lexington*, and landed on the 27th of November. On Monday (December 4th) following he was interred with funeral honors due to his rank. His coffin rested in a sort of *catafalco*, the lower part being in the form of a boat. The canopy was decorated with stars and



CATAFALGO.



PERRY'S MONUMENT.

trimmed with black curtains, and at each corner were black plumes. The State of Rhode Island afterward caused to be erected a substantial granite monument to his memory. It stands upon a grassy mound on the west side of the Island Cemetery, and at the base rest the remains of the commodore and the deceased of his family. The monument bears the following inscriptions. *East side*: "OLIVER HAZARD PERRY. At the age of 27 years he achieved the victory of Lake

COMMODORE PERRY FARM
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, R.I.

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Commission
150 Benefit Street
Providence, RI 02903

Photocopy of page 521 of Pictorial Field-Book
of the War of 1812 by Benson J. Lossing (New York:
1868), with woodcut of the Commodore Perry farm-
house in the center.

Photo #6