

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Henry Marchant Farm

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

South County Trail

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

South Kingstown

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

#2 Rep. Edward P. Beard

STATE

Rhode Island

VICINITY OF CODE

44

COUNTY

Washington

CODE

009

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

DISTRICT

PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

UNOCCUPIED

COMMERCIAL

PARK

STRUCTURE

BOTH

WORK-IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

SITE

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

**ACCESSIBLE**

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

OBJECT

IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

BEING CONSIDERED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

NO

MILITARY

OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Edward C. Prest, William Marchant Prest, Judith P. Bowden

STREET & NUMBER

165 Harvard Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Rockville Center

STATE

New York 11570

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

South Kingstown Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER

66 High Street

CITY, TOWN

Wakefield

STATE

Rhode Island 02879

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

South Kingstown Broadbrush

DATE

April 1975

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

CITY, TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island

**7 DESCRIPTION****CONDITION** EXCELLENT GOOD FAIR DETERIORATED RUINS UNEXPOSED**CHECK ONE** UNALTERED ALTERED**CHECK ONE** ORIGINAL SITE MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_**DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

Located in rural South Kingstown, the Henry Marchant House (figure 2) sits well back from South County Trail on its original ninety-acre tract of gently rolling and wooded farmland. Low, dry-laid stone walls divide the fields and define the edges of the property, with both deciduous and evergreen trees growing along these walls. Other concentrations of growth include several ornamental trees in front of the house, a row of maples on either side of the long driveway, and dense foliage along the highway frontage and at the northeast portion of the property (see site plan).

The Henry Marchant House, built by Joseph Babcock, is a two-and-a-half-story, gable-roof, center-chimney, timber-frame, clapboard-sheathed, five-bay-facade, five-room-plan structure with a shallow, one-story, lean-to addition--of the same construction as the main block of the house--across the rear. The house is traditionally dated between 1750 and 1760, but several details point to a somewhat earlier date, perhaps between 1720 and 1740. The chief exterior ornament is the center entrance, framed by Doric pilasters supporting a cushion-frieze entablature and a large pediment which overlaps the sill of the window above (see figure 3). Windows on the first story of the facade and on the side-elevations are capped with splayed lintels, while those on the second story--front and rear--abut the eaves, and the cornice molding is mitered out around their frames. These windows retain their original eight-over-twelve sash.

The interior retains its original five-room plan on both floors (see sketch plan). The stairhall is relatively large, with a three-run, open-string staircase--with panelled rails instead of balusters between the principal floors--as well as enclosed stairs to the cellar and attic. The front parlors on the first floor and the front chambers on the second floor have simple, vernacular Federal mantels. The southwest parlor has a handsome corner cupboard with an arched opening and a fine "Wilson's Patent" Federal stove. Except in the kitchen, all summer beams, plates, girts, and corner posts are cased and beaded. In the kitchen the rough-hewn chimney girt and side girt--now supported by four steel posts--are exposed, not cased. Doors throughout are primarily four panel, with some two-panel doors in the rear portion of the second floor; H-L hinges support these doors, which are fitted with brass hardware. All windows, except in the kitchen, are distinguished with single-unit four-panel, sliding interior shutters (see figure 4), an unusual feature found in only a couple of early eighteenth-century Rhode Island houses.

The cellar extends only beneath the front parlors and is part dry and part mortared-stone construction; stone steps lead to the front hall, and a bulkhead to the outside. The attic contains a chamber for smoking meat on the east side of the chimney.

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2

Only a few modifications have been made to the house and these in no way impinge upon its integrity. The original roof, shown as a gable-on-hip form in an early view (figure 1) and characteristic of the 1720-1740 period, was probably replaced with the current gable form at the end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth century; its framing is typical of that period. Other changes include the Federal mantels (probably installed around the time the roof was changed); the construction of a lean-to addition across the rear; the closet in the southeast upstairs chamber; and the division of the rear center room on the second floor to accommodate bathrooms and the rear stair. In addition, the entire facade was restored in the early 1970s, but construction techniques and materials match the original.

Several outbuildings complete the farm complex (see sketch plan). To the rear of the house are a cistern, three outbuildings, and--slightly removed--the foundations of an early barn (shown in an early view, figure 1), which burned in 1955. Directly behind the house is a one-and-a-half-story, shingled barn; an old privy is immediately adjacent. To the northwest of the house is a modest shingle shed and carriage house, built sometime in the nineteenth century on the site of an earlier shed (see figure 1). The original well remains much as it was in the eighteenth century a few yards southeast of the house.

Northwest of the house and near the center of the property is a family cemetery (figure 5), surrounded by a low stone wall erected by Frank Marchant in 1925. The cemetery contains a number of family graves--including that of William Marchant (1774-1857), Henry's son, and is said to contain the graves of several Indians and Henry Marchant's slaves.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

2

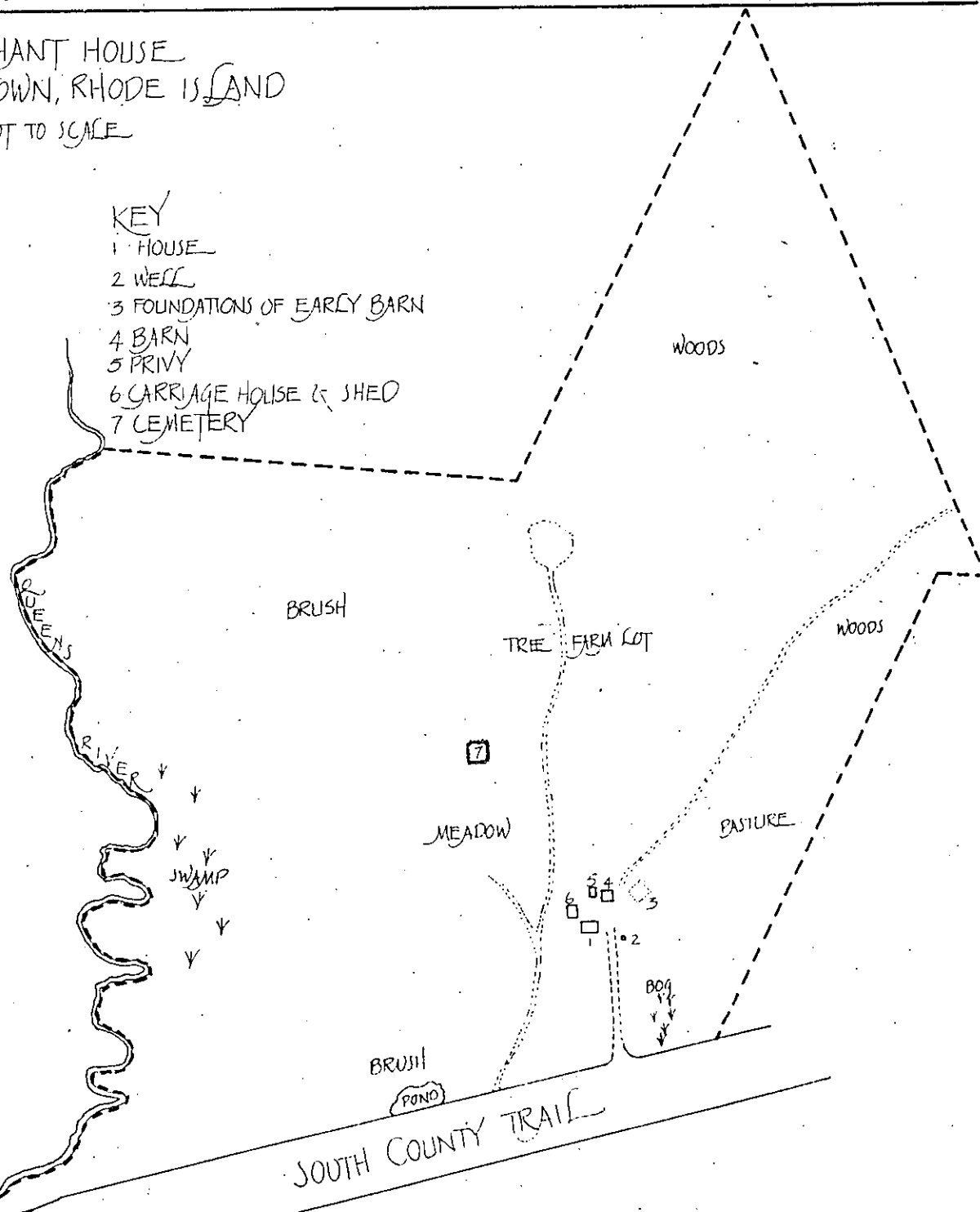
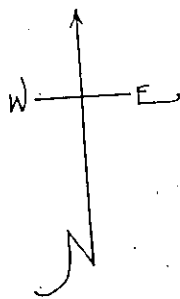
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HENRY MARCHANT HOUSE  
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND  
SKETCH PLAN -- NOT TO SCALE

KEY

- 1 HOUSE
- 2 WELL
- 3 FOUNDATIONS OF EARLY BARN
- 4 BARN
- 5 PRIVY
- 6 CARRIAGE HOUSE & SHED
- 7 CEMETERY



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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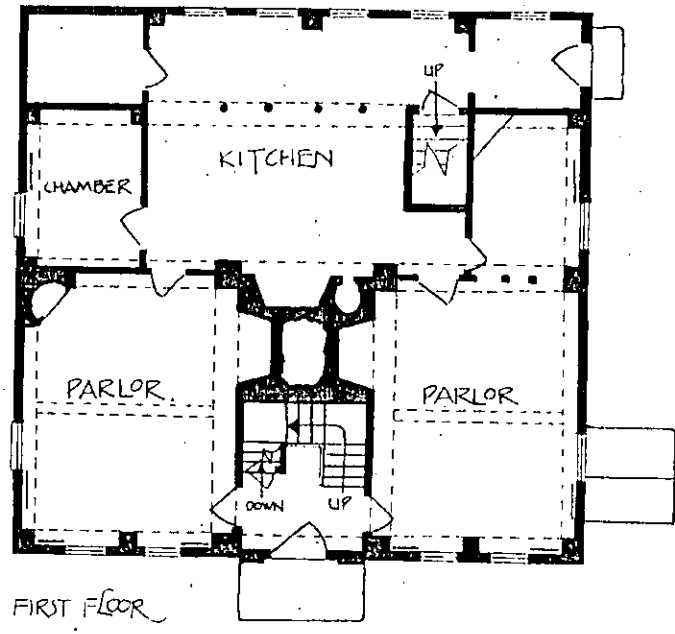
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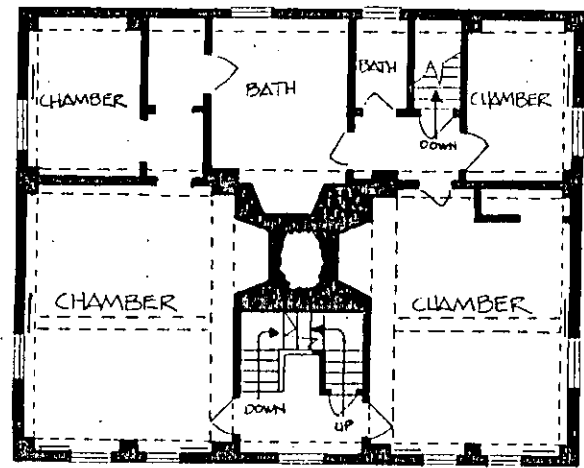
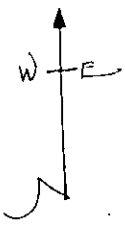
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FIRST FLOOR



SECOND FLOOR

HENRY MARCHANT HOUSE  
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND  
SKETCH PLAN - NOT TO SCALE

# 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Henry Marchant Farm is an outstanding complex, important as the home of Henry Marchant, Rhode Island Attorney General and Revolutionary War patriot; as an intact farm complex dating from the mid-eighteenth century and owned by one family since 1774; and as a well-preserved mid-eighteenth-century country house of considerable architectural interest. As such it achieves political, social, and architectural significance.

Henry Marchant (1741-1796) was reared in Newport in the home of his step-mother, Isabel Ward Marchant, whose family led the southern faction in an annual electoral battle for control of the colony's government during the middle years of the eighteenth century. Her brother Samuel Ward, thrice governor of Rhode Island, was Marchant's political mentor and legal client.<sup>1</sup> In 1766, Ward's ascendant political faction was instrumental in securing a position for Marchant as assistant to the Attorney General. Marchant was subsequently elected Attorney General in 1770, and held that office until 1777. In 1771-1772 he was a colonial agent to London, where he began an intimate acquaintance with Benjamin Franklin, which included a journey to Scotland. After his return to Rhode Island, he became a member of the Committee of Correspondence for the Colony.

He represented Rhode Island at the Continental Congress from 1777 to 1780 and again in 1783. After the Revolution, Marchant served in the Rhode Island General Assembly and participated, as an associate of James Mitchell Varnum, in the 1786 case of Trevett vs. Weeden, which challenged state fiscal policy and established legal precedents for the role of the judicial branch of government.<sup>2</sup> Marchant worked for the Rhode Island ratification of the Constitution in 1790. President Washington appointed him a District Court Judge in 1790, which post he held until his death in 1796.

<sup>1</sup>David S. Lovejoy, "Henry Marchant and the Mistress of the World." The William and Mary Quarterly, 3rd ser, XII (1955), 375-398.

<sup>2</sup>Sidney V. James, Colonial Rhode Island (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), pp. 366-369. Patrick T. Conley, "Rhode Island's paper Money Issue and Trevett v. Weeden 1786," Rhode Island History, Volume 30, Number 3 (August 1971), pp. 95-107.

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Henry Marchant bought his South Kingstown farm in 1774 or 1775 from the Babcocks, a South County family at least politically allied with the Ward faction if not, in fact, friends of Marchant. This move proved expedient particularly in view of the British occupation of Newport during the Revolution, and Marchant's position as a Narragansett Plantation owner with mercantile and professional ties to Newport parallels that of other South County landowners. His son William (1774-1857) likewise commuted between the farm and Newport, where he maintained his commercial interests, and his letters home to his family provide excellent documentation of the workings of an early nineteenth-century farm. It is likely that the structural changes made to the house were executed during William's ownership. The land was regularly farmed throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but in recent years has been used as a rural retreat for the family, who are direct descendants of Henry Marchant.

Continuous farm and country-retreat use has necessitated little change to the Henry Marchant House, which remains, as it was by the end of the eighteenth century, a handsome, substantial farm dwelling distinguished by its bold, simple detailing, its heavy timber frame, and its unusual interior sliding shutter panels. Its architectural significance is heightened by its relatively unaltered state.

This well-maintained home of an important Revolutionary War-era figure and his descendants is one of the best documented and best-preserved of its type in the state and an eminent candidate for entry on the National Register of Historic Places.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Donley, Patrick T. "Rhode Island's Paper Money Issue and Trevett v. Weeden (1786)." Rhode Island History. Volume 30, Number 3 (August 1971). pp. 95-107.

James, Sidney V. Colonial Rhode Island. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975. pp. 366-369.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 90 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,9	2,8,3	2,5,0	4,5	9,5	8,0,0	B	1,9	2,8,3	5,6,0	4,5	9,5	1,2,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		
C	1,9	2,8,2	4,2,0	4,5	9,4	6,3,0	D	1,9	2,8,2	6,9,0	4,5	9,5	4,1,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Town of South Kingstown, Rhode Island, Assessor's map 2-6, Block 109, Lot OL27.

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

Wm. McKenzie Woodward/Senior Historic Preservation Planner

ORGANIZATION

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

DATE

May 1979

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

*Frederick P. Williamson*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE June 8, 1979

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:

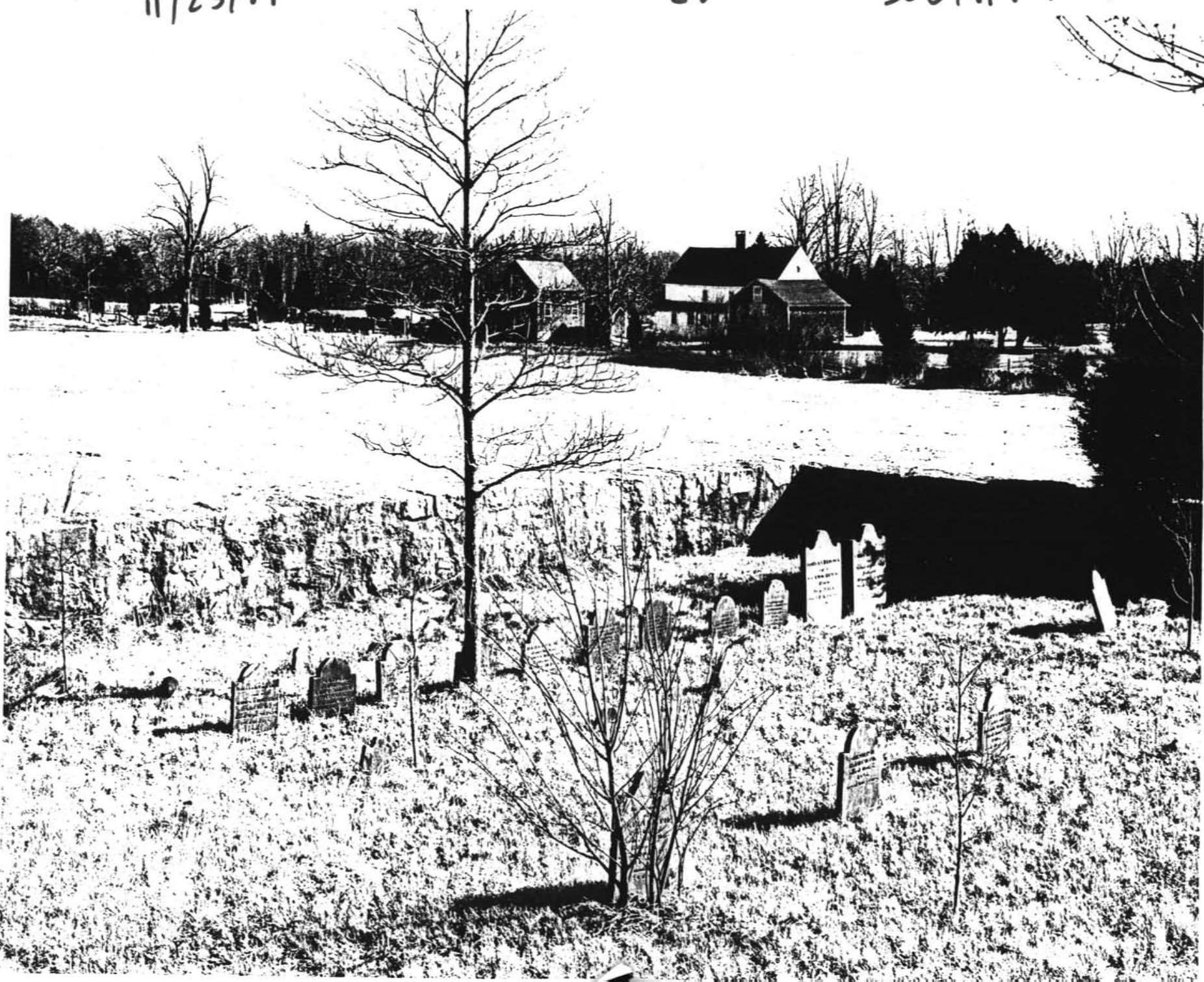
DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



borrowed for landscapes of R I  
11/23/99 ESW

NR ⑤  
SOUTH KINGSTOWN



HENRY MARCHANT FARM

SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND

Photographer: Richard Longstreth

Date: February 1976

Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission  
Cemetery, view southeast toward main house

Figure 5



HENRY MERCHANT FARM

SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND

Date: February 1976

Photographer: Richard Longstreth

Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Southwest chamber, second floor, showing sliding window  
panels

Figure 4



HENRY MARCHANT FARM

SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND

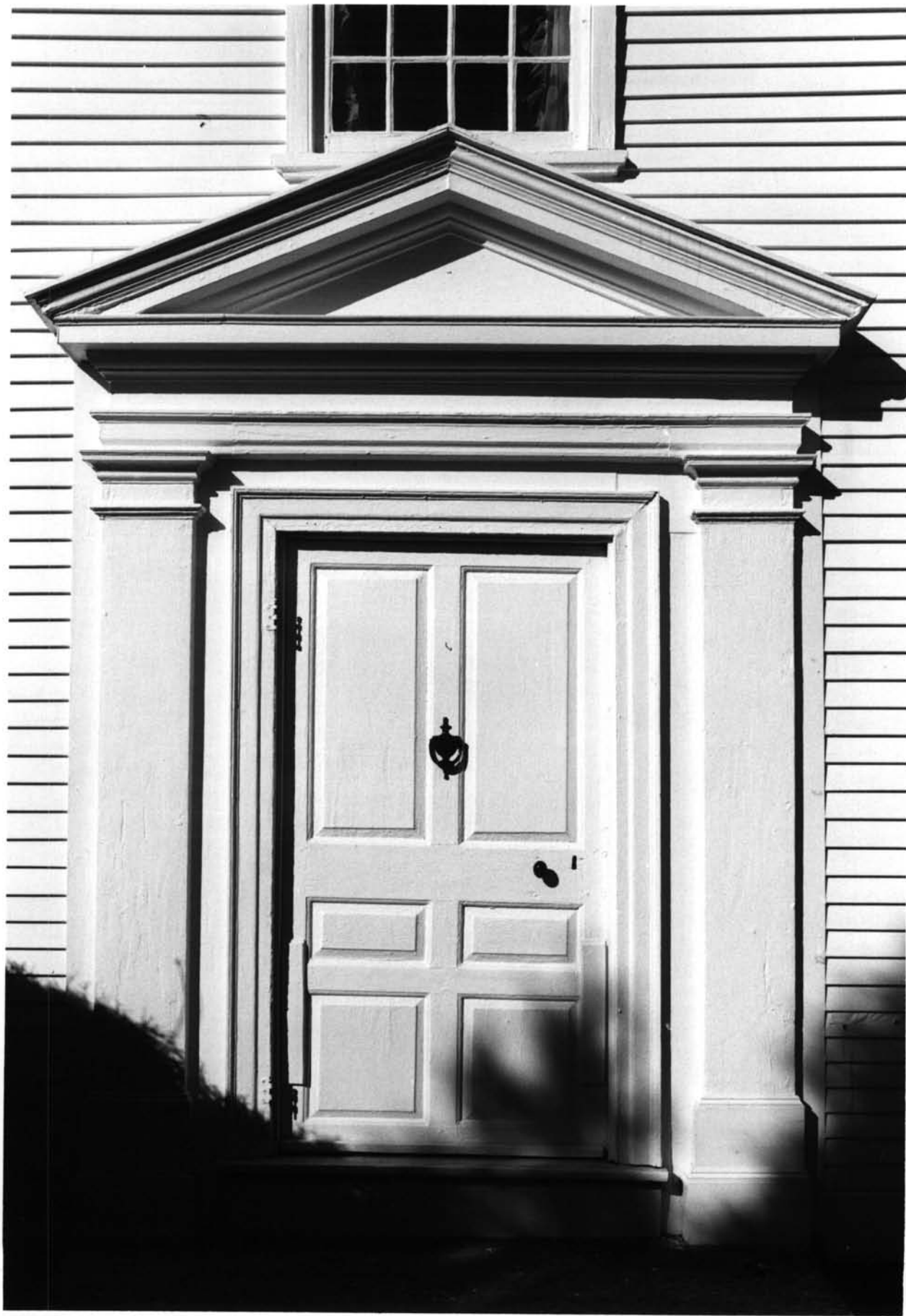
Photographer: Richard Longstreth

Date: February 1976

Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Facade of main house, view from southeast

Figure 2



HENRY MARCHANT FARM

SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND

Photographer: Richard Longstreth

Date: February 1976

Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Front door, detail

Figure 3

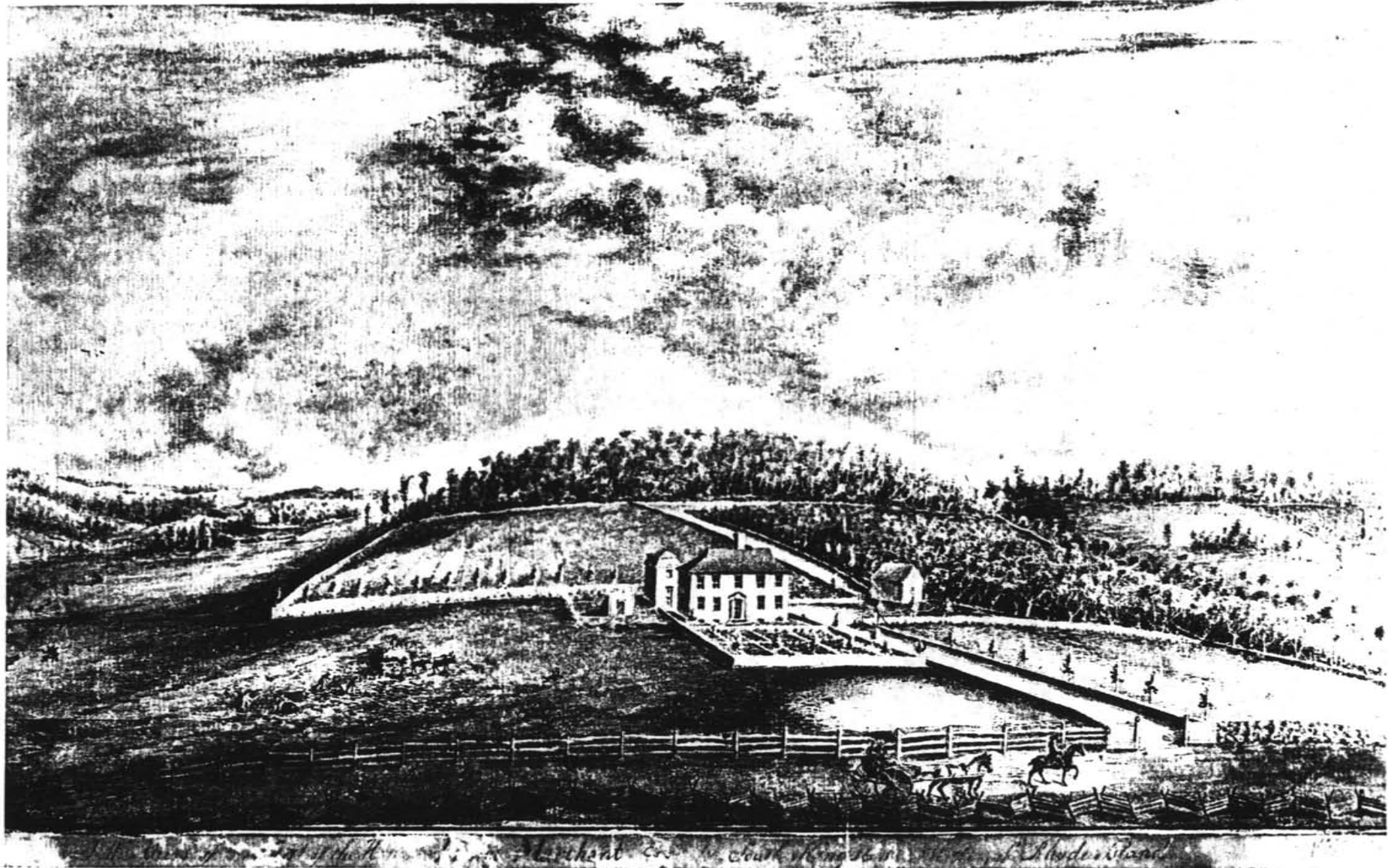


sketch for Landscapes of RI  
11/23/99

ESW

NR  
SOUTH KINGSTOWN

①



South Kingstown, Rhode Island

HENRY MARCHANT FARM  
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND

Anonymous Artist

Late eighteenth century, probably between 1775 and 1796

Original: Rhode Island Historical Society

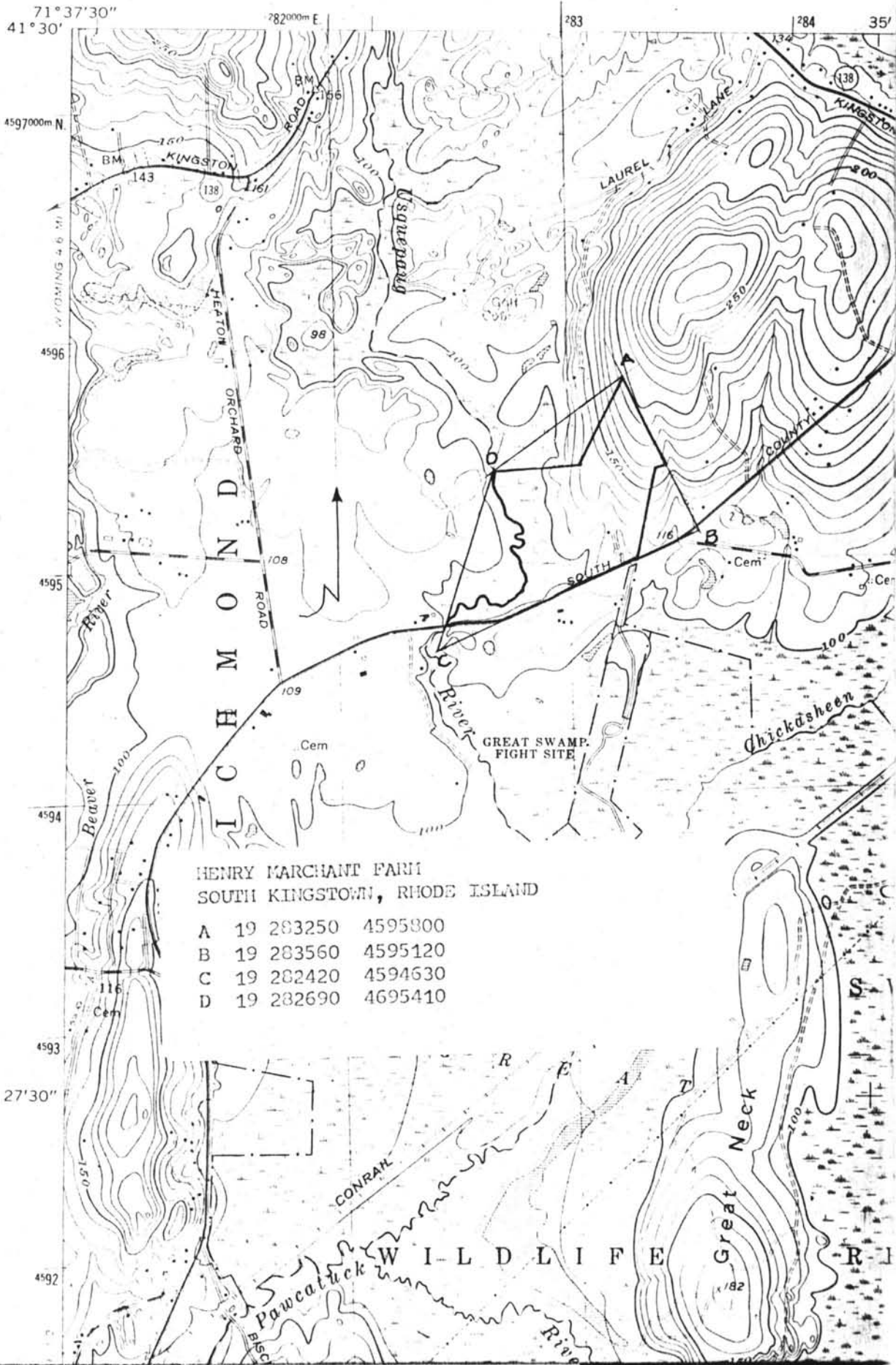
Negative: Rhode Island Historical Society

View of the Henry Marchant Farm from the south

Figure 1

6667 (1 SW)  
(HOPE VALLEY)

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY



HENRY MARCHANT FARM  
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND

A	19	283250	4595800
B	19	283560	4595120
C	19	282420	4594630
D	19	282690	4695410

WILDLIFE