10-300 (Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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STATE:	
Rhode Island	
COUNTY:	
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FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

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Foster Center Historic District is a small cluster of houses, public buildings, and other structures cohesively related through their common history and through their embodiment of a common vernacular architectural tradition. The District includes most of the hamlet of "Foster Centre," a social and commercial focus for the surrounding area from the mideighteenth century onward and the seat of Foster's town government from its incorporation in 1781.

The town of Foster grew up on land purchased from the Narragansett Indians in 1662 by William Vaughan of Newport, Zachariah Rhodes of Pawtuxet, and Robert Westcott of Warwick, in the name of the Westconnaug Company. Other influential Newport men soon joined the Company.

The land to the north of this Westconnaug Purchase was owned by the Providence Proprietors. Inevitably, as purchasers began to survey and claim these western lands after the conclusion of King Philip's War in 1677, land-right disputes arose between the two companies. Following the satisfactory resolution of these disputes in 1708, three successive drawings for 150-acre lots were held to apportion the 32,000 acres of Westconnaug.

The growth of roads in Foster is indicative of early settlement concentrations. Plainfield Pike, four miles to the south of the Historic District, was in use as early as 1709 and was established as a legal highway by act of the General Assembly in 1711. In 1720 a road was laid out through Westconnaug running from the land of the Providence Proprietors south and west to Killingly, Connecticut. It was beside this Killingly Road that the first town pound in Foster (at that time a part of Scituate) was erected in 1732. This stonewalled pound, forty-eight feet square with a heavy lintel hewn of Foster granite and a brook "big enough to fish in" running through its southwest corner, is in surprisingly good condition today. It marks the southwestern bound of the Foster Center Historic District.

About 650 feet to the northeast along the Killingly Road stands the Hammond House, built by Stephen Colegrove in 1756 on land he had purchased one year earlier. Colegrove's house was very likely the first built in Foster Center and is known by the name of its fourth owner, tavern-keeper Thomas Hammond, who bought house, barn, and one-hundred-acre farm in 1767. Today the Hammond House stands out more for its historic associations than for its architecture. It was originally a generously-proportioned gable-roofed house with five-bay facade, center chimney, and five-room floor plan. Changes in the

(See Continuation Sheet - 1)

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The Foster Center Historic District is significant for its long history as a focus of community life in western Rhode Island. The local convenience of the Center was first indicated in 1732 when Scituate erected its town pound beside the Killingly Road. Thomas Hammond operated his tavern as early as 1770 and at least one other tavern had opened by Welcome Rood's Tavern also served as the Center's | 1205 | first general store from the early 1800's until the end of the century. Reuben Hammond ran a thriving blacksmith business in the Center from 1825 onward as did Job Randall nearly a century later.

The Center has always been the seat of Foster's government. The first town meeting, November 19, 1781, was held in Thomas Hammond's tavern, as were many of the early meet-After 1801 Town Meetings were held in the Baptist Meeting House; they are still held there today. Until 1904 the Town Clerk's Office was located in the home of each subsequent Town Clerk. The Welcome Rood Tavern may have housed this office twice: probably from 1796 to 1803 when Nehemiah Angell was Town Clerk, and definitely in the 1870's when George Phillips held the office.

The Town House is a visible reminder of the Center's dual importance as a civic and religious center. Its shared occupancy for almost all of the 19th century embodies a continuing spirit of cooperation between civil and religious interests in town. For example, the church's first Elder, John Hammond, was also appointed the Town of Foster's first pound keeper.

Architecturally the Foster Center Historic District is important not for any unusual flourishes or refinements, but rather for its continued and clear development of a local ! style over a period of approximately 150 years. This style is characterized by good proportions, simplicity of line, and careful craftsmanship worked in the local materials of Foster-cut wood and stone.

(See Continuation Sheet - 3)

Form 10-300a (Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) - 2

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FOR NPS USE	ONLY .
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. Description

Killingly Road, and Foster Center Road. This is a very plain clapboarded two-and-a-half-story house with a one-story ell to the west (formerly a grain shed) and a pair of ells set at right angles to each other to the east. This pair of ells are the earliest sections of the house, probably dating from the closing decades of the eighteenth century. They may have been built by Nehemiah Angell, an early tavern keeper in town who served as Town Clerk from 1796 to 1803. Rood purchased the house from Angell in the early 1800's and thereafter built the main two-and-a-half story section of the house to serve as a tavern and general store.

Incorporated in this section is a fascinating second-story chamber designed specifically for Hamilton Lodge #15 of Freemasons, who occupied it in 1825. The room had a barrel-vaulted ceiling whose plaster arch and exposed framing are still visible in the attic above a later flat ceiling. The walls above chair-rail level are decorated with stencilled patterns typical of the early and middle 1800's: willow trees alternating with compass-point motifs, a central heart with leaves growing from it, and a cornice of stylized daisies. Similar stencilling was found in a downstairs room but had deteriorated beyond hope of restoration.

Other houses in the Foster Center Historic District noteworthy as much for their historical associations as for their architecture are the Ely Aylsworth House and the Dr. Mowry Arnold House. Aylsworth, another early tavern keeper and an active real estate broker, purchased his five-bay central chimney colonial house in 1824. It served as post office in 1851 and currently houses the Foster Police Headquarters and the Town Council Chamber. Twentieth-century changes have altered the house extensively. The Mowry Arnold House, a muchenlarged early-19th-century "cape," was purchased in 1830 by Dr. Mowry Arnold, practitioner of medicine in Foster for sixty years, as well as school commissioner for forty-six years and town treasurer for twenty-three years. The Arnold farm straddles the path of old Foster Center Road, with house on one side and contemporaneous barn on the other.

The Town Meeting House is the outstanding public building in Foster Center. It was built in 1796 to house the Second Baptist Church in Foster, which had seceded from the First Baptist Church in 1780 under the leadership of Elder John Hammond (brother to tavern-keeper Thomas). In 1801 the congregation permitted the building to be used for the Town (See Continuation Sheet - 3)

Form 10-300a (Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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(Number all entries)

7. Description

Meeting, a usage which led the church to deed the building to the Town in 1822, provided that the Town would maintain it and allow its continued use as a place of Christian worship. The Town House, as it subsequently became known, is still used for the annual financial town meeting. It is a large gable-roofed clapboarded building two stories high and five bays wide with a central flat-headed double door. It is set at the top of Howard Hill facing west. The interior architectural treatment, with simple pews on three sides and second-story gallery, is typical of rural Rhode Island church building during this period.

The Baptists eventually built another church in the Center in 1882. This is a good example of a vernacular adaptation of Greek Revival architectural forms and is at once surprising and typical of rural Rhode Island in its very retardataire stylistic usage.

The Foster Center Public Library, originally a one-room schoolhouse built sometime before 1847, also follows the simple lines and gable-end orientation of Greek Revival tradition. Closed in 1952 when a regional school system was instituted, the building was restored and re-opened as the town library in 1957. Two well-executed unobtrusive modern additions (1964 and 1970) have permitted its continued growth.

The Town Clerk's Office (built in 1904), the small wood-shed Jail (built c. 1910), and the Baptist Church parsonage (built c. 1882 and now a private residence) are other small public buildings stylistically derivative from the Greek Revival period.

8. Significance

The District's unique significance, however, is greater than the sum of these diverse elements. It is the preservation of a living sense of the past. Time has dealt kindly with Foster Center. Some alterations to individual buildings have inevitably occurred. A few nondescript twentieth century houses have been built within the District. But the Center maintains its basic historic and architectural integrity.

The area has not been closed in from its surrounding vistas of woods, hills, and fields. Those structures which have been built since Foster Center's most populous days of the 1820's are very much a logical extension of earlier local ar-

(See Continuation Sheet -4)

Form 10-300a (Dec.-1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES. INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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(Number all entries)

8. Significance

chitectural traditions and have been carefully placed in relation to pre-existent roads and structures. There are few discordant notes in the District, little to call attention to the tremendous span of years and of history that its twenty-odd structures reflect. The 1904 Town Clerk's Office blends equally well with the pre-1847 School House, the 1796 Town House, and the 1756 Hammond House.

Foster Center Historic District preserves in itself a unified portrait of, and to some extent the quality of life in, a rural Rhode Island town of 150 years ago. The hamlet of Foster Center exists in relation to the land much as it always has. It is an unspoiled phenomenon of increasing scarcity in our age of encroaching metropolis.

9. Bibliography

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Maps

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Plan of the Town of Foster by Conjecture (Foster, Rhode Island
October 2, 1781). Hand-drawn map in Rhode Island Historical

Form 10-300a (Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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9. Bibliography

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6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Historic American Buildings Survey RI-38 1958 Federal Library of Congress Independence Avenue and 1st Street, S.E. Washington District of Columbia

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, -	1859 ?).							
1 (Cady, J. H.: <u>Historic American Buildings Survey RI - 38</u>							
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

1. NAME		
Foster Center Historic District	Foster Centre	NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS)
2. LOCATION		
Rhode Island .	Providence	Foster
see Continu	ation Sheet #1	
PHOTO CREDIT	DATE	NEGATIVE FILED AT R.I. Historica
Ancelin V. Lynch	March, 1974	Preservation Commission, 52 Power St., Providence, R.I.
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DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.		

View of front facade of the Town Meeting House.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

1. NAME		A STATE OF THE STA
Foster Center Historict	Foster Centre	NUMERIC CODE (Assigned by NPS)
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View of the barn of the Dr. Mowry Arnold farm.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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View of the exterior of the Thomas Hammond House, from the northeast.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or en close with photograph)

1. NAME		
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2. LOCATION		
Rhode Island	Providence	TOWN Foster
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Ancelin V. Lynch	March, 1974	Preservation Commission, 52 Power St., Providence, R.I.
4. IDENTIFICATION		
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View of the Foster Town Pound.



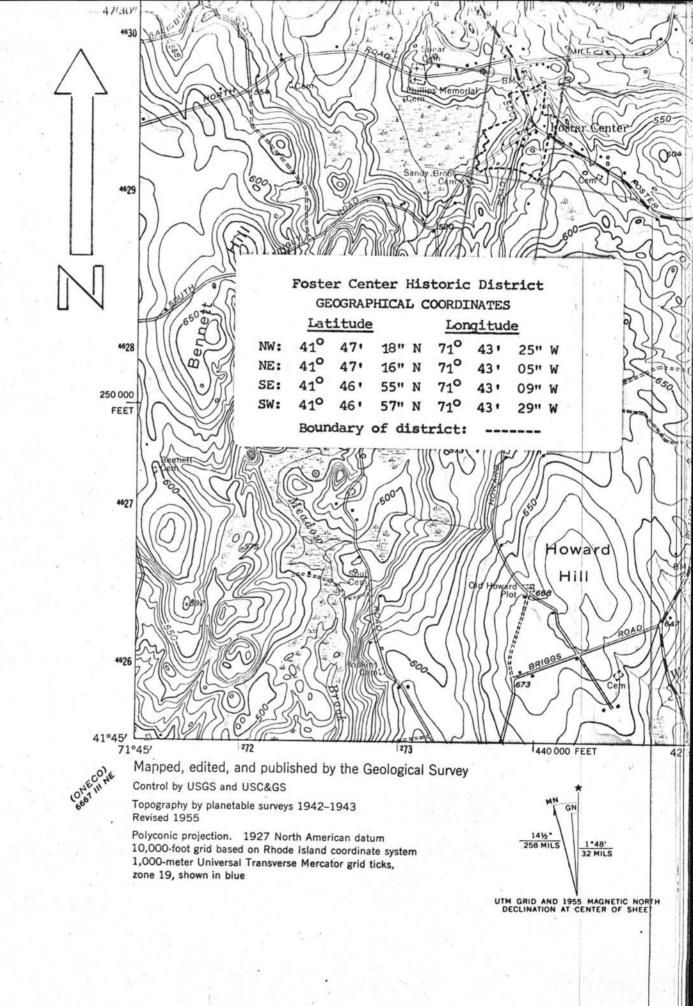
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

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Ancelin V. Lynch,	March 1974	Preservation Commission, 52 Power St., Providence, R.I.
4. IDENTIFICATION		
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View of Foster Center Public Library, showing the "Hemlock Schoolhouse" core, and modern addition.



Form 10-301 (Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY MAP FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with map)

Rhode Island

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FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY NUMBER DATE

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Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

	FOR NPS USE ON	DATE
COUNTY	Providence	9
STATE	Rhode Isla	and

(Number all entries)

Foster Center Historic District Selective Inventory Key to District Map

Map Number	Name and Date
1	Town Pound, 1732
2	Thomas Hammond House, 1756 .
3	Foster Town Jail, c. 1910 (moved)
4	Town Clerk's Office"Benjamin Eddy Building," 1904
5	Foster Center Baptist Church, 1882
6	Welcome Rood Tavern, c. 1780; main section c. 1820
7	Job Randall's Blacksmith Shop, c. 1901
8	Baptist Parsonage, c. 1882
9.	Foster Center Public Library"Hemlock School," before 1847
10	Ely Aylsworth House, c. 1780
11	Town House"Baptist Meeting House," 1796
12	Hopkins House, c. 1800
13	Dr. Mowry Arnold House, c. 1800
14	Arnold Farm Barn, c. 1830

