

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**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 Dexter Arnold Farmstead

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Rural Route 1, Box 78

CITY, TOWN

Scituate

VICINITY OF

#2 - Rep. Edward P. Beard

STATE

Rhode Island

CODE

44

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

COUNTY

Providence

CODE

007

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 type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input 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	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME James F. Schnelle, Jr.

STREET & NUMBER

Rural Route 1, Box 78 Chopmist Hill Road

CITY, TOWN

Scituate

VICINITY OF

STATE

Rhode Island 02857

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Scituate Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Scituate

STATE

Rhode Island 02857

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Not so represented

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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 Dexter Arnold house, constructed in 1813 from wood taken on its own acreage, stands with five ancillary buildings and a family cemetery on a 3.6-acre property in an elevated, still-rural "outskirt" of the village of North Scituate. This dwelling and the farmlands surrounding it remained in the ownership and occupation of direct descendants of Dexter Arnold, the builder of the house, until early 1975. During this long period, few changes occurred in the house or its accessory buildings, except the destruction of a large barn by the hurricane of 1938.

Built in a very restrained Federal style, this house is two-and-one-half stories, gable-roofed, and of pegged, post-and-beam construction (see photo #2). Clapboards cover the plank walls on all sides except the south end which is neatly faced with large shingles. The house is set upon a well-lighted basement of fieldstone externally faced with smooth granite slabs. It faces east and is set back a short distance from Chopmist Hill Road, from which it is partially screened by trees. The entrance elevation contains five generous bays, while the end elevations are three bays deep. Exterior adornment is sparse but well-handled, especially in the treatment of the front doorway, which is flanked by narrow panelled pilasters supporting concave consoles, which in turn support narrow slices of frieze with a sharply profiled cornice running across them above the four-paned transom and six-panelled door inset below. In front of this doorway are a large flat stone platform and step with an inset, wrought-iron boot scraper. Window enframements still, as in the XVIII Century, project noticeably from the wall, and their surrounds are absolutely plain, with no mouldings and only a narrow capping-board. Most windows have six-over-six-paned sash, but those on the north face retain both twelve-over-twelve and nine-over-nine sash. At the corners of the building are panelled pilasters with moulded caps; these support the short returns of a strongly profiled moulding running up under the end gables, but there is no eaves cornice or moulding at all at front or rear, where the roof overhangs these elevations by about six inches. There is a secondary entrance at the southwestern corner of the house; this, too, has a stone platform with boot scraper before it, supporting a modest gabled porch with two slim, square piers and trellised sides. A bulkhead at the northeast corner of the house provides exterior access to the basement.

On the interior, the plan is in general that dictated by a large central chimney serving three fireplaces on each principal floor. Customarily, this arrangement features three major and two minor rooms and a small front-center stairhall on each floor, with secondary stairways tucked in wherever possible. In the Arnold house one finds the expected major rooms downstairs: parlors of good size flanking the front entry and a commodious kitchen occupying most of the rear

(See continuation sheet 1)

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET

1

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

portion behind the chimney (see photo #6). However, the rear corner spaces of the house, flanking the keeping-room, contain two rooms each rather than the more usual one; thus there are seven rooms instead of five downstairs. These smaller rooms seem originally to have provided a bedchamber, a waiting room for the hired help, a milk room or pantry, and a rear entry or vestibule. Today the bedchamber, with its wall pegs for hanging garments still intact, has been made into a bathroom; the milk room, with its narrow nine-over-nine-sash window, has become a compact modern kitchen; the waiting room has become a den; and the entry remains an entry. Decorative trim such as mantels, doors and door hardware (see photo #5) has survived intact throughout the house, as has the original flooring and the horsehair plastering.

The small first-floor front hall has a tightly-angled stairway running up against the front of the chimney. The balusters of the plain stair rail are slim and square; the newels are plain and square with flat, cushion caps; the string is enclosed, with a white-painted, sharply moulded fascia. At one side, under the upper run of the stair, is a panelled door opening to a cupboard. Doors to left and right, like all other inside ones, are four-panelled and lead to the parlors.

These rooms -- as well as all others on this floor -- have narrow, moulded architraval door and window surrounds and a moulded chair rail above a plaster dado space; ceilings are eight feet high and join the walls without benefit of any cornice or moulding; corner posts are cased. The south parlor has a simple but handsome one-story mantel with panelled pilasters and frieze supporting a shelf with sharply moulded edges, and a cupboard (with doors) beside the fireplace. Mantel treatment in the north parlor is similar except that the pilasters and frieze are reeded. Woodwork in these and the smaller rooms is painted, while that in the large kitchen and the rear entry is stained a rusty brown. The west wall of the kitchen has the only two windows of the first-floor portion of that elevation, and the major portion of its east wall is taken up by the large cooking fireplace with bee-hive oven inset at its left. There is a flat wooden surround to hearth and oven, and a shallow shelf supported by a moulding runs above this; the space above this shelf is faced by the chimney's flat, unplastered stonework. At the southeast corner of the kitchen a narrow stair leads to the second floor.

(see continuation sheet 2)

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

2

ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE

3

On the second floor are three large chambers and three smaller ones, that off the back stairs and above the rear entry being for hired help. Door, window, and mantel trim upstairs is simpler than below, and mouldings are employed only for the chair rails and door surrounds. A frontal stair leads up to the garret space, which is largely unfinished, with chestnut rafters and cross-braces left exposed; the flooring is also of chestnut. There is one window at each end; and at the south end a partition creates a room about twelve feet square, fully plastered, which was additional accommodation for hired help. The spacious basement, with fieldstone walls mortared and whitewashed, is undivided except for a portion forming a storeroom or workroom in its northwest quarter. The vast stone base of the chimney takes much space, and inset into this base is an open cupboard with built-in stone shelves, presumably for preserves. Also in the basement is a massive stone table which may have been used for butchering or dairying purposes. Wrought-iron meat-hooks extending from some walls, and the many layers of whitewash on walls and ceiling, indicate how well-used and well-kept this farmhouse basement was.

House and outbuildings have come down through the years in a remarkably sturdy, largely unaltered condition, so that the present owners have not been obliged to undertake major restoration or rebuilding, but only a careful program of rehabilitation, repainting, minor repairs and the inconspicuous introduction of modern kitchen, bathroom, and heating amenities.

Five outbuildings remain in a picturesque, still-useful grouping near the house. (The large cattle barn -- mentioned previously and destroyed in 1938 -- was at a greater distance westerly, where its stone foundations still remain.) At the end of the gravel drive passing the south end of the dwelling stands a wide, early 19th-century one-and-one-half-story carriage house of pegged post and beam construction whose vertical plank walls are now covered in horizontal bevelled boarding. The carriage house carries a small (four-by-four-by-five-foot) cupola with weathervane upon its gabled roof. Its central portion is entered through a broad, flat-arched eastern portal without doors. At one side is a storeroom (with trap door to a root cellar below), and on the other side are a harness room with grain storage chests, and two stalls; above is a large hay loft. This structure was presumably used to shelter carriages and driving or riding horses, while work horses and farm wagons had their

(see continuation sheet 3)

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

3

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 4

space in the barn. Closer to the rear of the residence is an oblong, shingled structure, partly one-and-one-half stories and partly only one: this served as a combined woodshed, carpenter shop, and chicken shed (see photo #3). At a more discreet, less visible distance stands a gable-roofed, clapboarded windowed privy with three seats and interior wall cover of hair plaster just as in the main residence. North of the house is a square stone table approximately three-and-a-half-feet high and four feet square, supported on four quarried granite legs. (see photo #4). This table closely resembles the stone table in the cellar. The use of both tables is conjectural. Not far from the side entrance to the house stands a small wooden wellhead with pyramidal roof and iron crank; this dates from c. 1850, when it replaced an earlier structure. A granite stepping stone used for dismounting from carriages is located near the well beside the path to the south door of the house. The last outbuilding is the nearly square, gable-roofed corncrib of vertical boarding, raised about three feet above ground on stone corner pedestals. This was once farther back among the farm buildings but was moved to a spot close to the roadside and a little south of the main house, probably in the 1930s, when it was put to use as a stand for selling farm produce. The street facade of the corncrib has had a small addition to it and a modern roll-up garage door has been inserted.

Among the landscape features is a stone wall which begins at the northeast corner and runs back west and then south, taking a jog near its southwest end to include the family burying ground, Rhode Island Historical Cemetery, Scituate #111. Portions of the stone wall and trees edge the Chopmist Hill Road frontage. Particularly notable is a 200-year-old sugar maple, which stands on axis with the front entrance to the house. Local residents can still remember the tree being tapped for syrup. A variety of flowers and shrubs grow near the house; to one side of the house are the orderly rows of an apple orchard, while grouped behind it are splendid specimens of both coniferous and deciduous trees with, also, enhancing shrubberies.

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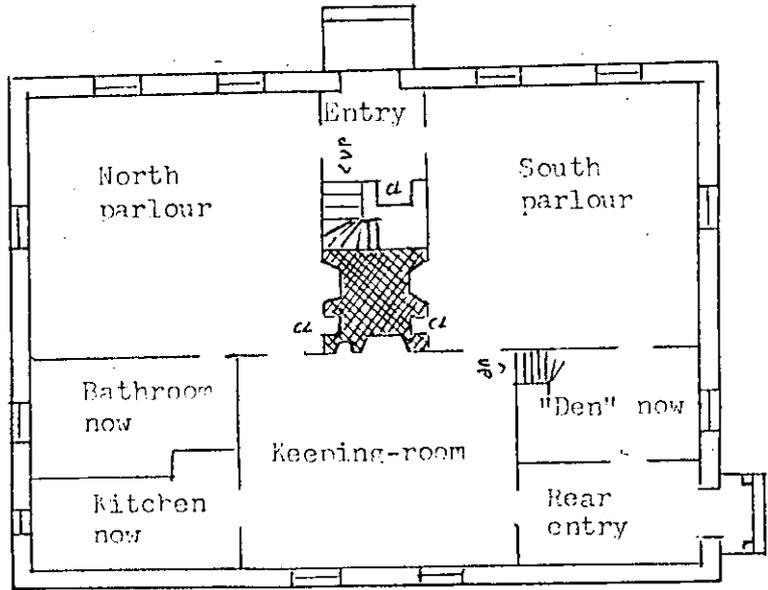
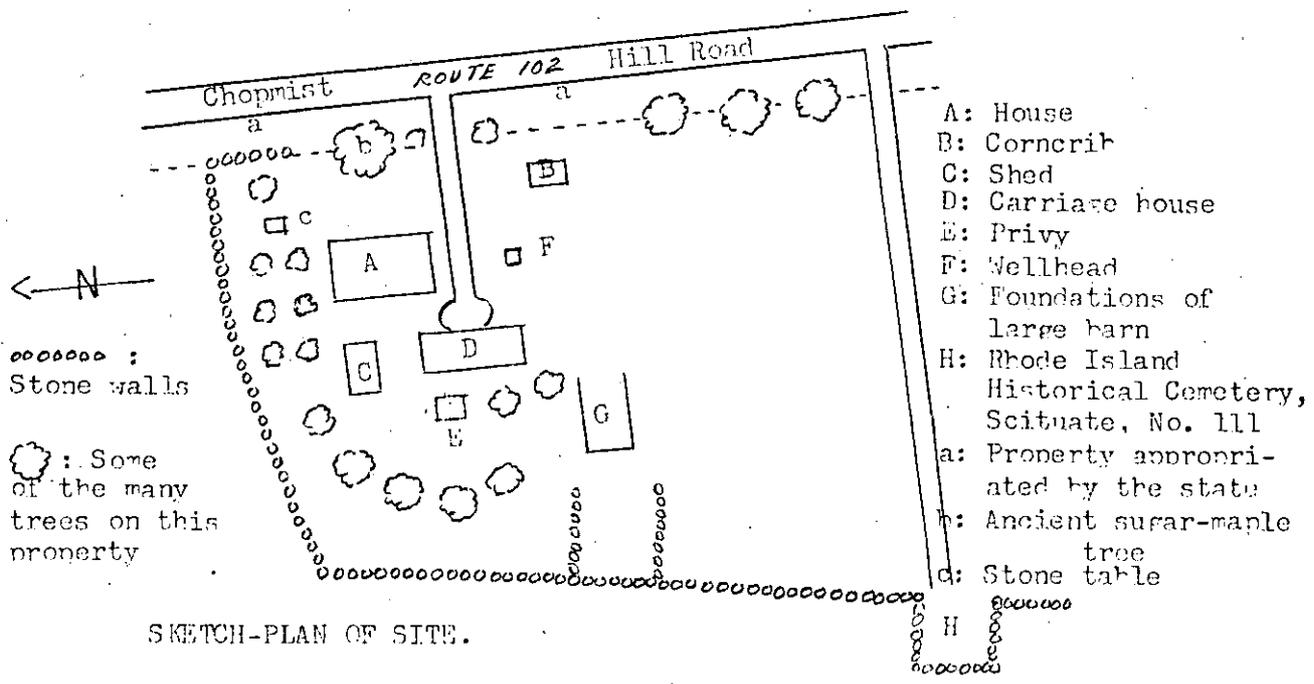
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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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CONTINUATION SHEET 4 ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 5



HOUSE PLAN (Not to scale). First Floor.

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 checked="" 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 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 type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1813

BUILDER/ARCHITECT not known (probably local housewright)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Dexter Arnold farmstead with its land, plantings, stone walls, and subsidiary outbuildings is of historical and visual importance to the town of Scituate for several reasons: it is an almost complete farm complex; its central building, the Dexter Arnold House, is of high vernacular architectural quality and integrity; and it has a long association with the prosperous Arnold family. While some modern single-family development has taken place along the northern section of Chopmist Hill Road, the growth of tract housing has not yet reached or surrounded the Arnold property. The house and its immediate environs are still quietly rural, despite the closeness of Chopmist Hill Road and the reduction of the farm lands to less than four acres. Farm fields and woods still surround the property on all sides.

The Dexter Arnold House is of particular importance because it has survived within a complete farmstead. Set among sheltering trees and traditional stone walls, the handsome 1813 house and the well-constructed and well-preserved outbuildings are those of an affluent farm family of the nineteenth century. The whole complex is an asset to both the town of Scituate and the state of Rhode Island because, while numbers of such old farmhouses do exist, many have been either heavily altered or heavily restored and few retain much of their land and natural setting. Still fewer retain the important closely-related complex of ancillary buildings which are essential to the portrayal of farm life. At Dexter Arnold's, however, much remains and now seems assured of excellent care and preservation.

Land, walls, family cemetery, and well-preserved structures -- including older hardware (such as boot-scrappers at both entrances to the house) and wooden fixtures (such as the sliding board-and-batten door between the carriage shelter and horse stall and the pole-and-peg ladder to the carriage house cupola) all remain.

The Dexter Arnold homestead was operated as a working farm by generations of Arnold descendants, who were born, lived, and died here, until the mid-twentieth century. The Arnolds, a distinguished Rhode Island family, are descended from Roger Williams, first settler of the

(see continuation sheet 5)

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

5

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

state, and from two Cranstons who were colonial governors. The Arnold family first settled in the more northeasterly Smithfield area of Rhode Island. (The Eleazer and Israel Arnold houses in Smithfield, now Lincoln, are already listed on the National Register.)

The house at the Scituate farmstead was built for Dexter Arnold on property which belonged to his father, Simeon Arnold. The scions of two noted Rhode Island families, Dexter Arnold (1782-1868) and his wife Freelove Cranston Arnold (1761-1861) were not extraordinarily wealthy, but they were hardly an impecunious struggling young couple. Within the limits of a country housewright's abilities, their house copied in many details and in plan, the crisp Federal style seen in more sophisticated form in Providence. The house became for the Arnolds and their children the headquarters of a prosperous agricultural enterprise.

Dexter Arnold's son, Simeon C. Arnold (1825-1891), inherited the farm from his father but his management of the farm was interrupted by service as a captain in the Civil War. Simeon Arnold trained a local volunteer infantry troop in marksmanship and drill on his land. Numbered gun racks which held the troop's weapons were installed in the barn; these are now at Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts. Simeon's son, Henry Cranston Arnold, succeeded to ownership and eventually left the farm to his daughter, Susie Ada Arnold MacDonald, who sold the homestead core of the family land in 1975.

The farm originally produced a variety of crops, including corn, barley, beans and potatoes, and dairy products, such as butter, for sale locally or in Providence. In recent decades, farm production has been confined to apples and the corncrib has been moved nearer the road to sell the apple crop. Although crops no longer grow near the house, it is still surrounded by a variety of trees (Japanese maple, sugar maple, pine, birch, cherry, dogwood, mountain ash, hawthorn, and chestnut) and shrub and flower plantings.

Despite the traffic along Chopmist Hill Road, the house and its surroundings retain the ambience of a self-sufficient nineteenth century farm, which the present owners hope to continue. However, the Dexter Arnold Farmstead is not unthreatened. Already the State of Rhode Island has acquired several feet of the Chopmist Hill Road

(see continuation sheet 6)

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RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

6

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

3

frontage, including the large old sugar-maple trees, as a right-of-way for a projected widening of the road. In addition, there is the continuing threat to many areas of Scituate and other Rhode Island towns of the proposed Interstate Route 84, which would certainly affect many otherwise peaceful, rural areas, and particularly this property, should the currently-favored alignment south of and parallel to U. S. Route 6 be implemented.

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

7

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE

2

Walker, Cyrus, "History of Scituate, Rhode Island." Manuscript at
Rhode Island Historical Society, c. 1900.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arnold Family Papers, Rhode Island Historical Society. Beaman, Charles C. An Historical Address Delivered in Scituate, July 4, 1876. Phenix: Capron and Campbell, 1877.

Federal Census, 1860; Manuscript copy, Rhode Island Historical Society.
(See continuation sheet 6)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 3.6 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,9	2,7,8,6,4,0	4,6,3,2,6,3,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Plat 35. lot 39

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard B. Harrington and Pamela Kennedy

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Richard B. Harrington

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE June 17, 1977

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











Dexter Arnold House, Dexter Arnold Farmstead
Scituate, Rhode Island

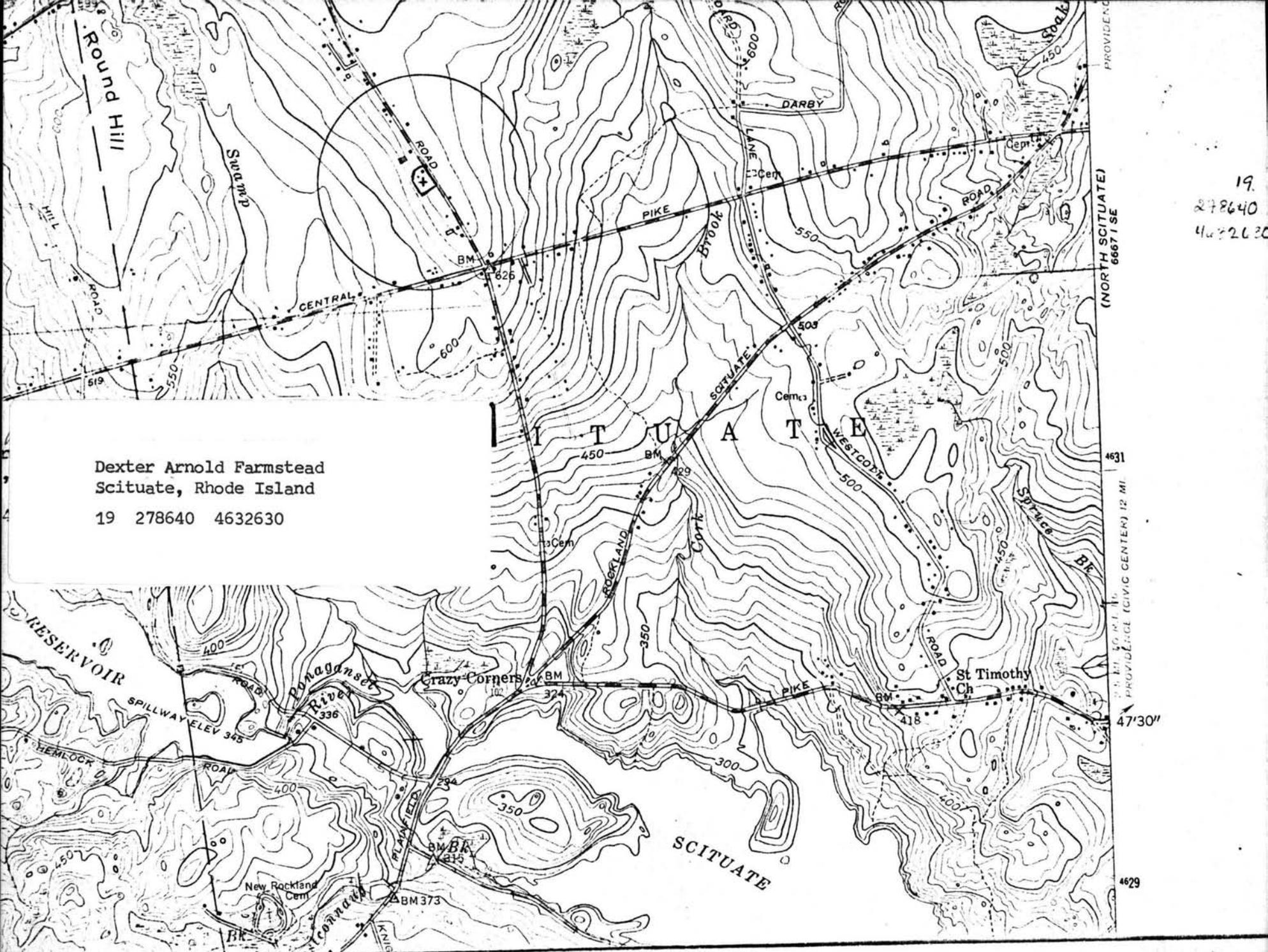
Eric Hertfelder
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

November, 1976

Fireplace wall of the southeast parlor.

#5





Dexter Arnold Farmstead
Scituate, Rhode Island
19 278640 4632630

19.
278640
4632630

PROVIDENCE
(NORTH SCITUATE) 66671 SE
4631
PROVIDENCE (CIVIC CENTER) 12 MI
47'30"
4629