

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

|                        |      |
|------------------------|------|
| STATE:<br>Rhode Island |      |
| COUNTY:<br>Washington  |      |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY       |      |
| ENTRY NUMBER           | DATE |

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Babcock-Smith House

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Babcock (Dr. Joshua) House; Smith (Orlando) House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
124 Granite Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Westerly

STATE: Rhode Island 02891      CODE: 44      COUNTY: Washington      CODE: 009

3. CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY<br>(Check One)   | OWNERSHIP  | STATUS  | ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC   |
|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building<br><input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure<br><input type="checkbox"/> Object | <input type="checkbox"/> Public<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private<br><input type="checkbox"/> Both                                    | Public Acquisition:<br><input type="checkbox"/> In Process<br><input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied<br><input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied<br><input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress          |
| PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)  |  |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural<br><input type="checkbox"/> Commercial<br><input type="checkbox"/> Educational<br><input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Government<br><input type="checkbox"/> Industrial<br><input type="checkbox"/> Military<br><input type="checkbox"/> Museum | <input type="checkbox"/> Park<br><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence<br><input type="checkbox"/> Religious<br><input type="checkbox"/> Scientific | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation<br><input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____<br><input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____<br>_____<br>_____ |

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Phebe A. B. Smith, Trustee under the will of Orlando Smith

STREET AND NUMBER:  
124 Granite Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Westerly

STATE:  
Rhode Island 02891

CODE:  
44

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Town Clerk

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Town Hall, 49 Broad Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Westerly

STATE:  
Rhode Island 02891

CODE:  
44

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1957       Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Independence Avenue and 1st Street, N.E.

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE:  
District of Columbia

CODE:  
11

STATE:  
COUNTY:  
ENTRY NUMBER  
DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

## 7. DESCRIPTION

|           |   |  |                               |                                       |   |                                    |
|-----------|---|--|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|------------------------------------|
| CONDITION | (Check One)                                 |  |                               |                                       |   |                                    |
|           | <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good | <input type="checkbox"/> Fair | <input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> Ruins                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed |
|           | (Check One)                                 |  |                               | (Check One)                           |   |                                    |
|           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered | <input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered       |                               | <input type="checkbox"/> Moved        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site |                                    |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Dating from 1750 or before, the house built for Dr. Joshua Babcock on an elevated site in Westerly is a locally conspicuous, handsome and typical example of the dwelling of a comfortably prospering American colonial of the mid-XVIII Century. It is a timber-framed, clapboarded structure of two-and-one-half storeys upon a stone basement, with a large central chimney of stone, plastered over. It is covered by a gambrel roof of wood shingles which, on the east, is brought down over a rear extension, in "salt-box" profile. There is a one-and-one-half storey gabled ell (built c. 1848 to replace a less commodious XVIII-Century one) which extends to the north and whose front is a flush extension of the main house's entrance elevation; the ell has also a (tall and thin) central chimney. Cellar spaces extend under most of the main house and most of the ell; in the former, two large cellar chambers are connected by a brick arch through the large chimney base; in the latter there is also a partial sub-cellar, said to have been made for wine storage.

The main house has a five-bay front elevation and had, originally, two widely-spaced windows on each major floor, and one in the gable, at the ends. At the south end, two smaller windows have been introduced in irregular placement in the "salt-box" extension; at the northern end, the ell partially covers the original arrangement of openings. This ell extends the north-south elevation by four bays. Front entrance to the main house is through an imposing doorway in its central bay (now forward from the surface of the house and fronting a small vestibule), and front entrance to the ell is a doorway in its third bay to the north. A low, gable-roofed vestibule (modern) projecting near the south-east corner of the house encloses a basement gangway which probably originally had a simple shed-type covering hatch.

Simple in exterior form and fenestration, the house is also simple in exterior trim, with certain emphatic, intended exceptions. Along the front of the house the gambrel roof extends well forward of the wall plane, and this generous eaves angle houses a pronounced and heavy projecting moulded cornice which has long, narrow modillions beneath it. Beneath the modillions a moulded architrave band runs across the facade and is brought forward to cap each of the second-floor windows, whose frames--like those below, and typical of early buildings--project well out from the clapboard wall surface. All windows have simple moulded sills; however, the first-floor windows have deep, high and heavy moulded capping cornices with (due to the projecting window frames) a noticeable end return against the house. This latter treatment has been followed on the front windows of the much later ell also, but side and rear windows around the house are not similarly elaborated. (Principal windows of the main house have 9-over-9 sashes, which are probably restorations.)

The main decorative feature of the house is its large front doorway: Surrounded by a robustly-moulded architrave, the six-panelled door

(See Continuation Sheet)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

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(Number all entries)

7. Description.

(probably also a restoration) is flanked by fluted Tuscan pilasters upon panelled pedestals; these support a frieze, which breaks forward over them, and a wide and impressive broken-scroll pediment with carved rosettes in its volutes. The base cornice of the pediment is also brought forward over the pilasters, and again at its middle, where it supports a panelled plinth rising against the tympanum. At this central point the moulded architrave is given a curved pinch or point upwards, as if to form a bracket for the plinth above. This is the frontal pièce de résistance; the ell has its front doorway of simple Greek Revival design, and the other elevations are modest and silent.

Internally, the house has on its principal floors the expected, customary five-room plan dictated by a central chimney. An entry hall immediately behind the added front vestibule contains the main staircase, rising in three angular runs against the chimney and having a ramped rail supported by three varieties of twisted balusters rising from each tread and a twisted newel encased in carved openwork (all now, if not originally, shown in natural wood finish). A ramped wainscot moulding echoes the line of the hand-rail. The principal reception rooms open off the hall to north and south--the parlour to the south having a fully-panelled and pilastered fireplace wall, a wooden cornice, embrasured windows with interior shutters and window-seats, an elaborately pilastered and coved corner cupboard (all original). The dining-room to the north was lengthened towards the rear of the house in the restoration of the 1920's, and its fireplace wall then copied that of the parlour. The old kitchen across most of the rear of the house became a sitting-room after removal of domestic offices to the 1848 ell, but it retains its high and eight-foot-wide mortar-covered fireplace with oven; flanking the kitchen at the rear are small chambers. The plan of the second floor follows that of the first, but with simpler trim, although two upstairs chambers at the front of the house have panelled fireplace walls and hearth surrounds of old blue-and-white Dutch tiles.

The house remained in Babcock ownership until 1817. There was intervening ownership until 1848, when it was purchased by Orlando Smith, who was responsible for rebuilding of the ell. Successors in his family made alterations in the 1880's, which included the small hip-roofed vestibule which retains but protrudes the fine front doorway; a balcony added above; and stained-glass windows (now replaced) at the sides of the vestibule. Since the Smiths discovered, and prospered from, a nearby granite quarry, the residence property was early in their time given the granite walls and copings which still surround it on three sides. Later Smiths, in 1926-1928, engaged Norman Isham, a Providence architect and historian of local architecture, to restore the house to its original appearance as much as possible. This he did with characteristic expertise and sympathy, and--excepting the nevertheless harmonious later ell--the house is now presented as of the XVIII Century. Careful collecting and sorting by Smith occupants leave the house now with valuable furnishings of that period and of the early XIX Century.

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

|  |                                       |  |                                       |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |                                       |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) c. 1750, c. 1848

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

|  |   |   |   |
|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering          | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Science   | <u>1. Medicine</u>                                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention            | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | <u>2. Site of first</u>                             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape            | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  | <u>Westerly Post Office, est. by</u>                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture         | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | <u>Benjamin Franklin.</u>                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature           | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military             |   |   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                |   |   |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

From its first building and occupancy by the Babcocks, and then for more than one hundred years in use by the Smith family, this house has had an important position in the town of Westerly--topographically, historically, politically and socially. Even now, with shopping plazas, super-markets and eating-places nudging it, the house on its slightly elevated plot--with its walls, lawn and one or two outbuildings--retains its importance, though its physical survival will depend upon both recognition of its history and value and legal and financial support of its fabric.

Dr. Joshua Babcock was born in Westerly in 1707 and attended Yale College, where, in 1724, he was the first student from Rhode Island to receive a degree. Later he studied medicine and surgery in this country and in England. Returning to Westerly to practice the skills he had learnt, he gave time also to other important interests and demands. He was a member of the Rhode Island legislature, served as this colony's Chief Justice, and was among the founders of what is now Brown University. This many-faceted personage became a friend of Benjamin Franklin and was often host to him in Westerly, where they indulged in fishing and colloquia. In return for hospitality, Franklin provided his host's house with some of his newly-invented lightning-rods. When an independent American government had been declared, Franklin saw that his friend was appointed postmaster for the Westerly area, and the original ell of Babcock's house became the post office.

The local importance of the house was revived when it and its land were acquired, 1846-1848, by Orlando Smith, who had uncovered granite quarries nearby, producing wealth for himself and, for Westerly, prosperity and industry for many years to come. About 1848 he moved his household into the old Babcock dwelling, and ever since then descendants in the Smith family have given the house good care.

Smith heirs have now undertaken arrangements to devise the house to the Westerly Historical Society, which is willing to accept the property and responsibility for its future maintenance--with contents--as a headquarters and house museum. Westerly is a bustling modern town, but it is also one which embraces a long period of Rhode Island history and events, a long succession of architectural styles: the Babcock-Smith house is of prime importance in all of these.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Downing, Antoinette F.: Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Virginia, 1937), pp. 124, 128, 134, 135, 146, 147, 173, 193, 195, 202, 235, 237.  
 Smith, Franklin C.: Unpublished paper read before the Westerly Historical Society, Westerly, Rhode Island, May, 1959.  
 U.S. Works Progress Administration. Federal Writers' Project: Rhode Island. A Guide... (Boston, Massachusetts, 1937), p. 307.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

| LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY |                         |                         | O<br>R | LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES<br>DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY<br>OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES |                         |  |
|--|-------------------------|-------------------------|--------|---|-------------------------|--|
| CORNER   | LATITUDE                | LONGITUDE               |        | LATITUDE  | LONGITUDE               |  |
|  | Degrees Minutes Seconds | Degrees Minutes Seconds |        | Degrees Minutes Seconds   | Degrees Minutes Seconds |  |
| NW   | 0 0 0                   | 0 0 0                   |        | 41° 22' 16.37" N  | 71° 49' 12.68" W        |  |
| NE   | 0 0 0                   | 0 0 0                   |        |   |                         |  |
| SE   | 0 0 0                   | 0 0 0                   |        |   |                         |  |
| SW   | 0 0 0                   | 0 0 0                   |        |   |                         |  |

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: approx. one acre

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

| STATE: | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|--------|------|--------|------|
|        |      |        |      |
|        |      |        |      |
|        |      |        |      |
|        |      |        |      |

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Richard B. Harrington, Consultant

ORGANIZATION: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission      DATE: Dec. 24, 1971

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 52 Power Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence      STATE: Rhode Island 02906      CODE: 44

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

SKETCH FLOOR PLANS  
JOSHUA BABCOCK'S  
OLD HOUSE

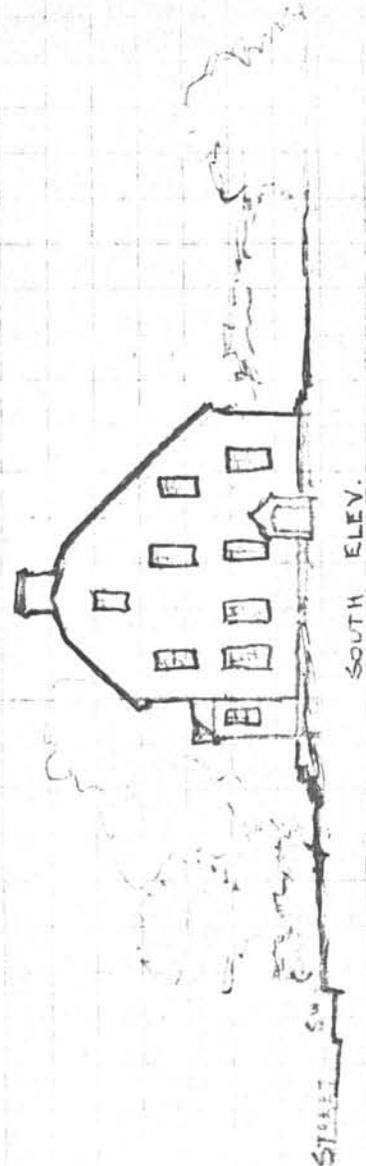
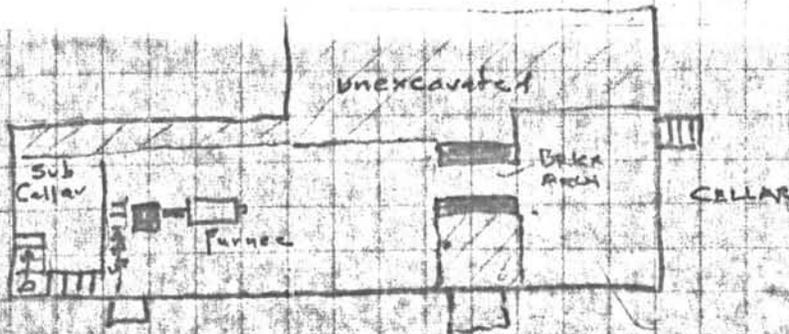
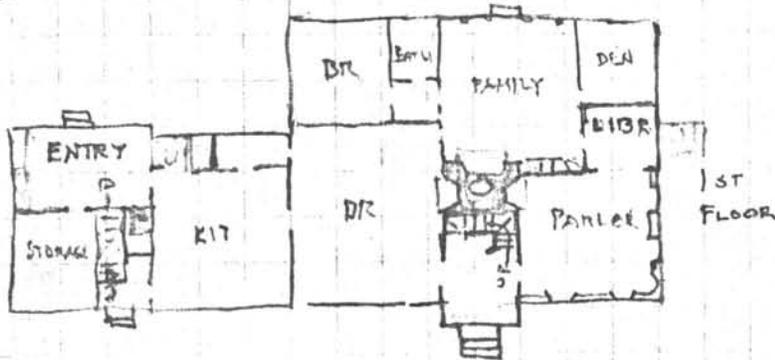
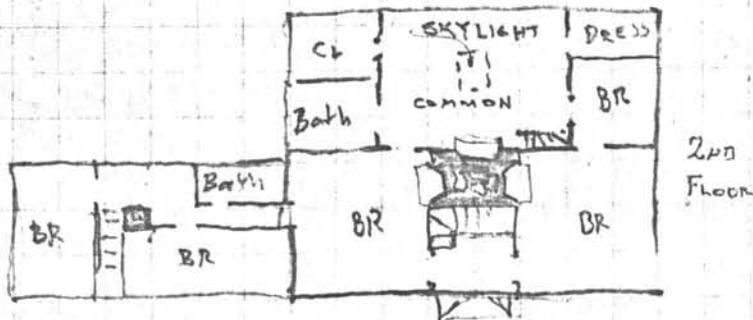
OCT 11 1971  
163

BABCOCK - SMITH HOUSE

(This name adopted by W.Hist. Society 1971)

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CONDITIONS AFTER 1928



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)

|                       |      |
|-----------------------|------|
| STATE<br>Rhode Island |      |
| COUNTY<br>Washington  |      |
| FOR NPS USE ONLY      |      |
| ENTRY NUMBER          | DATE |
|                       |      |

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

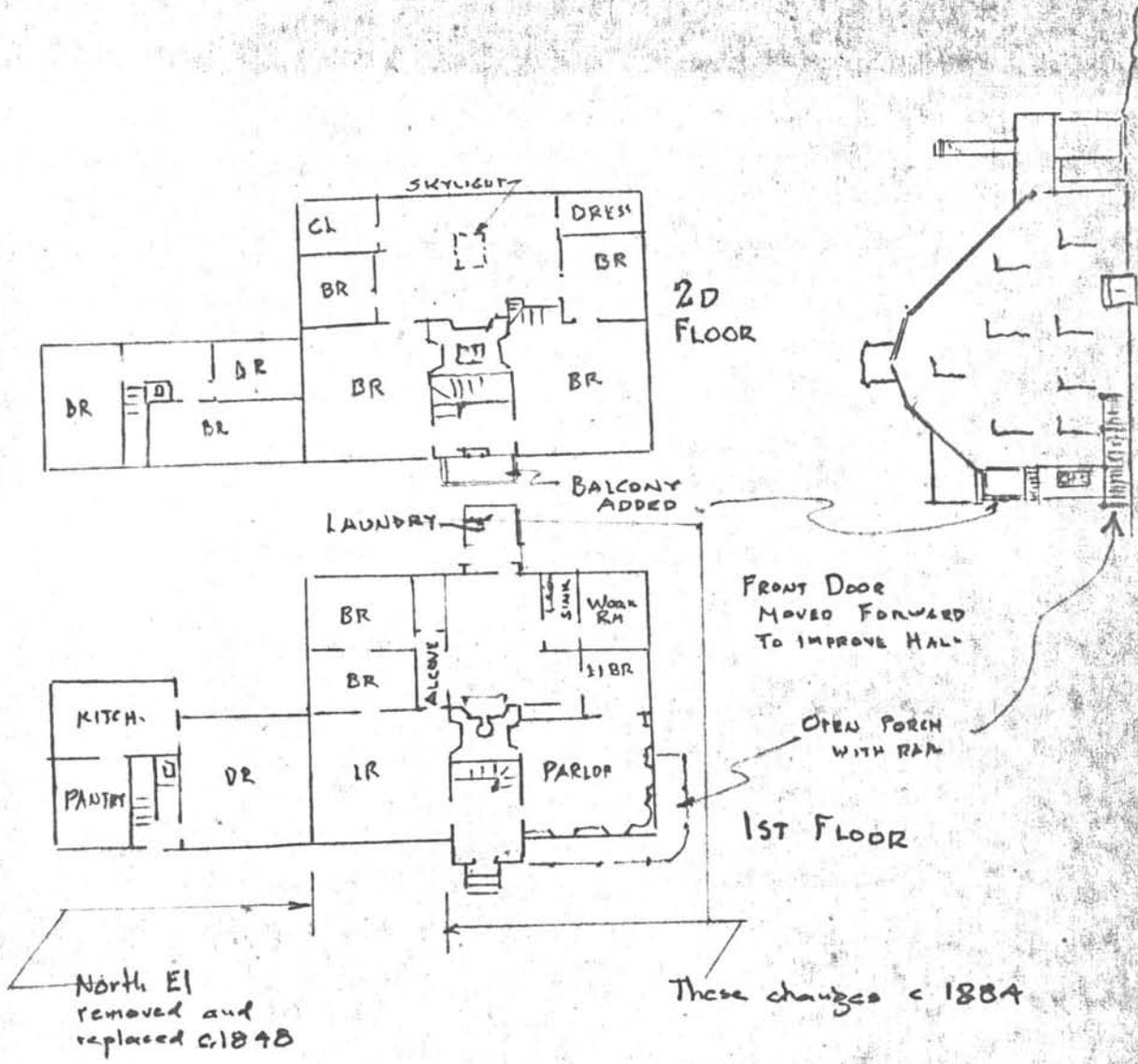
|   |            |                       |             |
|---|------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| 1. NAME   |            |                       |             |
| COMMON: Babcock-Smith House   |            |                       |             |
| AND/OR HISTORIC: Babcock (Dr. Joshua)--Smith (Orlando) House  |            |                       |             |
| 2. LOCATION   |            |                       |             |
| STREET AND NUMBER:<br>12 1/2 Granite Street   |            |                       |             |
| CITY OR TOWN:<br>Westerly   |            |                       |             |
| STATE:<br>Rhode Island  | CODE<br>44 | COUNTY:<br>Washington | CODE<br>009 |
| 3. PHOTO REFERENCE  |            |                       |             |
| <del>PHOTO</del> CREDIT: Isaac G. Smith   |            |                       |             |
| DATE OF PHOTO: 1971   |            |                       |             |
| NEGATIVE FILED AT: Isaac G. Smith, 69 East Avenue, Westerly, Rhode Island   |            |                       |             |
| 4. IDENTIFICATION   |            |                       |             |
| DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.<br>Sketch-plans of cellar, first-floor and second-floor arrangements, and of south elevation, after restoration work by Norman Isham finished by 1928 ( <u>i. e.</u> present condition). |            |                       |             |

SKETCH FLOOR PLANS  
JOSHUA BABCOCK'S  
OLD HOUSE

JAN 2 1972  
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BABCOCK - SMITH HOUSE

EARLY CONDITIONS AND CHANGES OF C. 1884



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)

|                       |      |
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| COUNTY<br>Washington  |      |
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COMMON: Babcock-Smith House

AND/OR HISTORIC: Babcock (Dr. Joshua)--Smith (Orlando) House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

12 1/2 Granite Street

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Westerly

STATE:

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44

COUNTY:

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CODE

009

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

~~KNOW~~ CREDIT: Isaac G. Smith

DATE OF PHOTO: 1971

NEGATIVE FILED AT: Isaac G. Smith, 69 East Avenue, Westerly, Rhode Island

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

Sketch-plans of first- and second-floor arrangements, and of south elevation, up to and including renovations of c. 1884.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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| COUNTY<br>Washington  |      |
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Babcock-Smith House

AND/OR HISTORIC: Babcock (Dr. Joshua) House; Smith (Orlando) House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

124 Granite Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Westerly

STATE:

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CODE

44

COUNTY:

Washington

CODE

009

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: Ross S. McElwee

DATE OF PHOTO: November, 1971

NEGATIVE FILED AT: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, State House,  
90 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island, 02903

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

Entrance (west) front.



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| AND/OR HISTORIC: Babcock (Dr. Joshua) House; Smith (Orlando) House   |             |                       |             |
| <b>2. LOCATION</b>   |             |                       |             |
| STREET AND NUMBER:<br>12 <sup>1</sup> / <sub>2</sub> Granite Street  |             |                       |             |
| CITY OR TOWN:<br>Westerly  |             |                       |             |
| STATE:<br>Rhode Island   | CODE<br>111 | COUNTY:<br>Washington | CODE<br>009 |
| <b>3. PHOTO REFERENCE</b>  |             |                       |             |
| PHOTO CREDIT: Ross S. McElwee  |             |                       |             |
| DATE OF PHOTO: November, 1971  |             |                       |             |
| NEGATIVE FILED AT: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, State House,<br>90 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island, 02903 |             |                       |             |
| <b>4. IDENTIFICATION</b>   |             |                       |             |
| DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.<br><br>North, or fireplace, wall in parlour, showing stair-hall and vestibule space through doorway.  |             |                       |             |



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3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: Ross S. McElwee

DATE OF PHOTO: November, 1971

NEGATIVE FILED AT: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, State House,  
90 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island, 02903

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

Main house seen from the south-east, showing "salt-box" extension.



GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES

Latitude: 41° 22' 16.37" N

Longitude: 71° 49' 12.68" W

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
PROPERTY MAP FORM

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

|                       |      |
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CODE

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3. MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE:

U. S. Geological Survey

SCALE:

1: 24,000

DATE:

1953

4. REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.