

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Babcock House

AND/OR COMMON

Whistling Chimneys

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Main St., Quonochontaug

CITY, TOWN

Charlestown

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2 Edward Beard

STATE

Rhode Island

CODE

44

COUNTY

Washington

CODE

009

**3 CLASSIFICATION****CATEGORY**

DISTRICT  
 BUILDING(S)  
 STRUCTURE  
 SITE  
 OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

PUBLIC  
 PRIVATE  
 BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

IN PROCESS  
 BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

OCCUPIED  
 UNOCCUPIED  
 WORK IN PROGRESS  
**ACCESSIBLE**  
 YES: RESTRICTED  
 YES: UNRESTRICTED  
 NO

**PRESENT USE**

AGRICULTURE  
 COMMERCIAL  
 EDUCATIONAL  
 ENTERTAINMENT  
 GOVERNMENT  
 INDUSTRIAL  
 MILITARY  
 MUSEUM  
 PARK  
 PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
 RELIGIOUS  
 SCIENTIFIC  
 TRANSPORTATION  
 OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mrs. Harold Brown

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Main Street, Quonochontaug

CITY, TOWN

Charlestown

VICINITY OF

STATE

Rhode Island 44

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Town Hall, Town of Charlestown

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Route 2

CITY, TOWN

Charlestown

STATE

Rhode Island 44

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**TITLE Survey of Rhode Island Architecture, National Society of  
Colonial Dames in Rhode Island

DATE

1932

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Rhode Island Historical Society Library

CITY, TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" 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 Babcock House, commonly called "Whistling Chimneys," is presently a two-and-a-half story, gable-roofed building of five bays with a framed center door and a large central stone and brick chimney. The structure is covered with naturally stained wooden shingles and white painted wooden trim. It faces south, with Quonochontaug Pond immediately to the west.

Structurally, the house has been enlarged on several occasions, all within this century; but the original sections of the building remain relatively unchanged on the interior. As built, the original house consisted of a two-and-a-half story, three-bay, gabled unit to the east of the central chimney and a story-and-a-half gabled ell extending to the west. The massive chimney, serving three rooms on the ground floor and one chamber above, is constructed of stone in the basement and first level and of brick in the second story and attic. The foundations of the building are a local granite with a full basement beneath the eastern half of the house. Within, exposed and cased corner posts are seen throughout the house, and summer beams and plates are visible in the two main rooms of the ground floor. Lowered ceilings conceal the plates in other rooms.

Fenestration in the Babcock House is extremely irregular and shows many changes. Four narrow four-over-four windows on the west side of the house, two on the third floor and two in the west wall of the keeping room, appear to be original. A glazed cupboard in the southwest parlor also shows original or early glass. A complex molded cornice breaks forward at each of the second story windows on the south facade.

The present owner, Mrs. Harold Brown, placed a bay window above the front door, a horizontal group of three connected windows on the western half of the south facade, first floor, and added one double-window dormer on the south and two on the north in the early 1950's. In the early 19th century an entrance door was added on the east facade, replacing the lower right window there.

The entrance door, slightly off center on the south facade, is a framed four-panel door with a horizontal group of three transom lights at the top. Within, the entry includes a stairway which rises against the chimney in three runs. It has square posts and flat balusters sawn out in a modified "S" pattern. From the second to the third (garret) level, the balusters are straight. The string of the stairs is enclosed by fine raised paneling on the first level and simple vertical

(see continuation sheet 1)

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sheathing above. A raised one-over-one panel door conceals the basement stairs immediately below. Peg molding and corner posts with a boldly beaded edge are also seen in the entry stairhall.

To the left of the entry, the keeping room is dominated by a large stone fireplace built of 8"-10" square granite blocks. A brick beehive oven is built into the right rear of the fireplace; the lintel is a 10" x 4" chestnut beam. A granite hearth extends 2½' into the room. There is a later narrow mantel shelf and exposed stone above. The corner posts, plates, and summer beam have been restored and painted, and modern rafters have been added where the originals were removed. A corner cupboard with raised panel doors is located in the southwest corner of the room. A series of scalloped shelves are located behind the door of the upper half and the corner post can be seen at the back. Original wrought iron "H" hinges are used on the corner cupboard, and strap and "HL" hinges can also be seen throughout the house. A complex cornice molding across the top of the corner cupboard corresponds to the width of the plate. The original wide oak floor boards remain unpainted in this room.

On the opposite side of the chimney from the keeping room is located the main parlor, distinguished by an elaborately panelled chimney wall. A 30"x 40" stone fireplace has been filled in by an early nineteenth century Franklin stove. The hearth is constructed of 7" square bricks, thought to have been imported as ballast due to their unusual shape. The fireplace opening is delineated by a bolection molding. An elaborate raised panel wall extends from floor to ceiling and 32" to the left and right of the bolection molding, thus abutting the northwest corner post in the room. Centered in the north wall of the room, a built-in-cupboard is flanked by two four-panel doors leading into the rear chambers. The upper half of the cupboard has a twelve-pane glazed door attached by original "HL" hinges. Below, there is a door of two vertical, raised panels. As throughout the house, the three parlor doors are raised four-panel units; wooden latches and latch strings have been restored in all rooms. The windows have been changed, but modern twelve-over-twelve sash has been installed by the present owner.

(See continuation Sheet 2)

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Two small rooms, presumably bed chambers, complete the ground floor of the original two-and-a-half story gable area of the house. The room in the northeast corner is the smaller and has been altered in character by the replacement of the room's east window by a major entrance door. The second bedroom, directly north of the chimney, is longer and is connected to the keeping room. On the exterior, the additional length of this room was accommodated by a leanto from the keeping room and attached to the original two-and-a-half story section. This northwest chamber is decorated by a chimney breast similar to that in the parlor but smaller in scale. A bolection molding around the fireplace and paneled wall is completed by a cornice of complex silhouette. All paint has been removed from this woodwork. A single raised panel of chair rail height to the left of the chimney breast paneling is unique to this room. The flooring here is of pine.

On the second floor, the plan of the eastern section of the house reproduces that of the floor below. The main chamber has a fireplace surround very similar to that of the parlor but reduced in scale by one third. The fireplace is built of brick with a pink granite lintel inset by two small blocks of wood. Square bricks are also used for the hearth in this room. The corner posts are exposed but the summer beam, running east and west, and the plates have been concealed by the lowered ceiling.

To the north, two small bedrooms open off of this main chamber. The western room of the two was also connected to the main stairway by a narrow passageway running along the western side of the chimney. Around 1900, the house was enlarged by raising the roof of the western ell and inserting a full second floor. That new area now contains two bedrooms and a rear stairway for the house. The attic area was left unfinished but was probably used as a sleeping loft. One interesting feature of the attic is a smoke oven built into the fireplace at this level.

A nineteenth century photograph of the house shows an open leanto porch on the north side of the west ell and a two-story open porch across the front (south) of the house. In the early twentieth century the leanto was converted into a kitchen and the double level porch was removed. Subsequently, a glassed-in porch on the west end of the keeping room, and a utility room

(See continuation Sheet 3)

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3

ITEM NUMBER

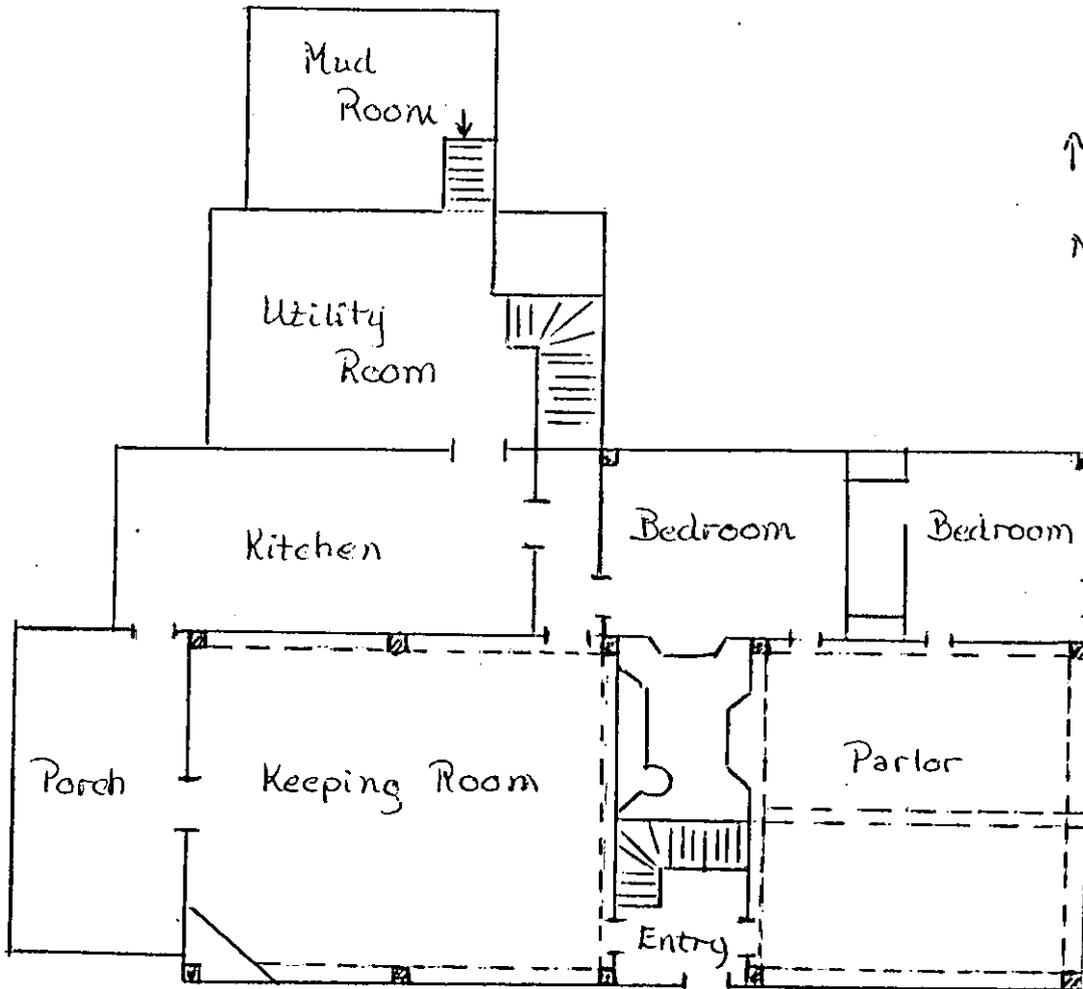
7

PAGE

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and mud room to the north have been added.

Although the present structure on the exterior is greatly changed from the original formation, the interior spaces and finishing remain relatively unaltered. The house is still surrounded by substantial acreage which maintains its early agricultural environment. The stone walls dividing the area adjacent to the house also suggest the farming functions.



# 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 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 type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

No definite information has been uncovered to determine the date of construction or original builder of the house. It is located on an area of land known as Quonochontaug Neck which has been developed as a summer resort colony. Originally, however, the land was owned by the Stanton family, and it is logical to assume the house was built by them. Because of the house's close proximity to the water, it has been posited that the house was built there to serve as a trading post. Thomas Stanton, founder of the family in this area, ran a trading post in nearby Stonington, Connecticut.

In plan and original design, this house closely resembles the Sheffield House, thought to have been built by Joseph Stanton sometime between 1685 and 1713 and located less than a mile to the east on Quonochontaug Neck. Both structures were originally composed of a central chimney, a one-story gabled ell to the left and a larger unit on the right.\* The Babcock House, despite its extensive additions, maintains the high quality of its interior finish. The chimney and stair organization and panelling are all excellent examples of characteristic local architecture. The siting of the house and the property attached to it enhance the Babcock House's significance as a physical reminder of Rhode Island's early agricultural development.

\*This combination of two sections built at the same time, of differing heights and proportions on either side of a chimney which thus becomes central, is an unusual plan formation found in Rhode Island in a number of early "South County" structures.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The National Society of the Colonial Dames in the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. Old Houses in the South County of Rhode Island. Boston: B. D. Updike, 1932.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 5

UTM REFERENCES

A	19	2 73 07 0	45 79 55 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

Keith Morgan, Chief of Curatorial Services

September 22, 1975

ORGANIZATION

R. I. Historical Preservation Comm., 150 Benefit

St. (401) 277-2678

STREET & NUMBER

Providence, Rhode Island

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

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE October 29, 1975

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

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Representative Men and Old Families of Rhode Island. Chicago:  
J. H. Beers & Co., 1908.

Stanton, William A. A Record, Genealogical, Biographical and  
Statistical of Thomas Stanton of Connecticut and His Descendants,  
1635-1891. Albany: Joel Munsell's Sons, 1891



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HISTORIC Babcock House

AND/OR COMMON

Whistling Chimneys

**2 LOCATION**

CITY/TOWN Charlestown

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE Rhode Island COUNTY Washington

**3 PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT Keith N. Morgan

DATE OF PHOTO July, 1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

**4 IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO. 1

View of south front facade.



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CITY, TOWN Charlestown

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

COUNTY Washington

STATE Rhode  
Island

**3 PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT Clifford M. Renshaw, III

DATE OF PHOTO July, 1970

NEGATIVE FILED AT Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission  
150 Benefit Street, Providence, Rhode Island

**4 IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

Fireplace wall, Main Parlor

PHOTO NO.

3



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STATE Rhode  
Island

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DATE OF PHOTO July, 1970

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

NEGATIVE FILED AT 150 Benefit Street, Providence, Rhode Island

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PHOTO NO.

Fireplace, north bedroom, first floor

4



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Rhode  
STATE Island

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Entry stairwell

PHOTO NO.

5



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CITY, TOWN Charlestown

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

COUNTY Washington STATE Rhode  
Island

**3 PHOTO REFERENCE**

PHOTO CREDIT

DATE OF PHOTO late 19th century

NEGATIVE FILED AT Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

**4 IDENTIFICATION**

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO 2

View of house from across Quonochontaug Pond, late nineteenth century