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



__MILITARY

DATE ENTERED SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS **1** NAME Jeremiah Dexter House HISTORIC AND/OR COMMON **2** LOCATION STREET & NUMBER 957 North Main Street NOT FOR PUBLICATION CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT CITY, TOWN Providence VICINITY OF Rep. Fernand S. St. Germain 1 CODE STATE CODE COUNTY 007 Rhode Island 44 Providence **3** CLASSIFICATION CATEGORY OWNERSHIP STATUS PRESENT USE _DISTRICT ----PUBLIC. XOCCUPIED ___MUSEUM __AGRICULTURE ___8UILDING(S) XPRIVATE -UNOCCUPIED **COMMERCIAL** __PARK X-STRUCTURE ROTH -WORK IN PROGRESS __EDUCATIONAL ___PRIVATE RESIDENCE __SITE PUBLIC ACQUISITION ACCESSIBLE __ENTERTAINMENT __RELIGIOUS __OBJECT _IN PROCESS XYES: RESTRICTED ___GOVERNMENT __SCIENTIFIC __BEING CONSIDERED ___TRANSPORTATION -YES: UNRESTRICTEDINDUSTRIAL

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME John B. Nevin Estate

STREET & NUMBER Mr. John Gorham, Attorney 58 Weybosset Street CITY, TOWN STATE Providence Rhode Island VICINITY OF

__NO

F LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE. Providence City Hall REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER Dorrance and Washington Streets

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STATE Rhode Island

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6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

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1937, 1955

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CITY, TOWN Washington STATE D. C.

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Jeremiah Dexter House at 957 North Main Street is a rectangular, one-and-a-half story gambrel-roof structure built on a typical eighteenth century central chimney, five-room plan. It was measured and photographed for the Historic American Buildings Survey circa 1940.

Built in 1754 by Jeremiah Dexter, and one of the few remaining houses once typical of Providence farm building, the structure is of timber frame construction, set on a rough stone foundation, and was originally entirely clapboarded, although the ends are now shingled. The remaining clapboards are shiplapped and graduated in width, the wider boards toward the top. On the front a molded eaves cornice breaks forward to form the window and door caps; drawings show that originally at least some end windows also had molded caps.

The six-panel front door, which retains its original wrought-iron strap hinges and latch, is set in a plain enframement and has a fivepaned transom above. There are two windows at the left of the doorway, and one on the right. The narrow window frames are original. All originally had nine-over-nine sash, but the lower sashes now have single panes. The corners of the house are finished with beaded corner boards. The large central chimney is square in shape, and the top is articulated. A low cellar extends under all of the original structure. About 1850 a two-room one-story gable-roofed ell was added in the rear, the central room on the rear was expanded slightly with a bay, and a lean-to was added to the kitchen on the south. The roof of the house and ell is now covered with modern asphalt tiles.

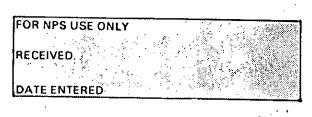
Originally there were barns and other yard buildings, including a well and corncrib set in a spacious farm yard. Many of these buildings and the grounds survived the onslaught of city development until the end of the nineteenth century, with the corncrib extant into the 1940's. The HABS measured drawing of the corncrib shows that it had vertical plank walls, slanting outward, and a gable roof, and was set on large stones placed at the corners. Only the well remains today, set behind or east of the house within a small wooden gable-roofed enclosure. The remaining grounds, now reduced to approximately 5,000 square feet, are paved over for a parking lot and bounded by a picket fence. The area is zoned commercial, and the house faces west onto North Main Street, a heavily travelled thoroughfare.

The interior has retained most of its original features and paneling, although some of these have been covered over with modern wall sheathing which can be removed. Drawings show that the windows throughout the house originally were finished with molded sills and broad architraves finely molded on both edges. Unfortunately, this window framing has been removed.

(see Continuation Sheet 1)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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GPO 892 455

CONTINUATION SHEET

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ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE

The original part of the house is divided on the first floor into five rooms with a tiny entry vestibule in front of the central chimney, which serves fireplaces on three sides. The kitchen, or keeping room, located on the southwest side of the house, contains a large splayed fireplace fitted with a crane, with a bake-oven set at the side front. The walls of this room have what is probably the original randomwidth vertical pine sheathing; the door on the south wall is sheathed on the inside with wide horizontal planks and retains its original wrought-iron strap hinges and latch. As in the rest of the first floor, the ceiling is plastered and the corner-posts are cased.

The northwest room was a parlor and is notable for its fireplace, which has a brick hearth, an iron lintel, and a bolection molding of early unsymmetrical profile around the opening, and an overmantel composed of three vertical panels. The middle room on the east side or rear of the house is flanked by a small bedroom on the north and a pantry on the south. It also had a tiled hearth and fireplace with splayed side-walls; the paneling is now concealed behind plywood.

A very narrow front stair leads to the second floor, which was originally divided into four rooms with plain sheathed walls, and exposed beams. The northern room here contains a brick fireplace that is slightly splayed.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Jeremiah Dexter house is architecturally significant as an example of early Providence farmhouses; it is historically significant as the only survival of an early Providence farm settlement and⁰ because in 1782 the French Army under the command of Vicomte de Rochambeau chose the property as the site of their encampment while in the vicinity of Providence. It is now the most notable physical feature remaining in the City that can be linked to the French presence in Providence during the Revolution. Fortunately, the house is almost unaltered, and is thus a rare surviving example of a once common Providence building type.

During the first half of the eighteenth century several members of the Dexter family lived on neighboring farms all of which were part of the estate owned by Jeremiah Dexter's great-grandfather, the Reverend Gregory Dexter, an associate of Roger Williams. The Jeremiah Dexter house was built in 1754 slightly over a mile north of Providence at the foot of Herrendon Lane (today called Rochambeau Avenue) on the Pawtucket Turnpike (North Main Street) which was part of the original Boston to New York highway. A granite milepost which shows the distance to the Providence Court House as "14M." still stands on the Dexter lot. Jeremiah Dexter was a farmer and according to tradition a "natural bone setter" who lived on this farm with his family of nine children until his death in 1807. His grandfather, John, lived on a farm just to the north, and his father, Stephen, lived still further north along the turnpike. Only the Jeremiah Dexter house, which has been continuously owned by descendants of Jeremiah Dexter, remains of this original Dexter family settlement. It is still (in 1976) in Dexter family ownership.

The arrival of the French Army in Newport in mid-July of 1780, too late in the season to be of any offensive help to the American Army, necessitated their quartering in Rhode Island during the winter of 1780-1781. The Army left Rhode Island the following June to join General Washington's forces near Yorktown, Virginia, camping enroute on a plain in the southwestern section of Providence. In November of 1782, on the triumphant return march of the French Army from the decisive victory at Yorktown, this campground was again occupied. However, the owner of the site refused to permit the French to cut wood for fuel and barracks, and the following day Rochambeau marched his troops to a new encampment on the Dexter farm.

(See continuation sheet 2)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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CONTINUATION SHEET 2

Form No., 10-300a (Rov.-10:74)

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The Dexter property was ideal for the camp. It was situated on high and well-aired ground and was located close enough to Providence and Pawtucket for the convenience of the commissaries, yet remote enough to create a buffer zone between the troops and the citizens of Providence. Reverend Edwin M. Stone in <u>Our French Allies</u> (1884). described the campground:

> The spot selected for the camp was a plateau on the summit of the ridge lying east of "Pawtucket Avenue" (now North Main Street). ...Each side was lined with tents. On the eastern side ...were several ranges of huts... (each) fifteen feet long and twelve feet wide. A large headquarters tent, surmounted by an ornamental urn, was pitched near the western side.

Although it is not so recorded, it is likely the French were offered the hospitality of Dexter's house. They stayed for three weeks, building barracks, parading and resting until word arrived from Boston that the French fleet was prepared to embark the Army. To cover the cost of the wood cut and damage done, Jeremiah Dexter was paid \$1,446 in Continental currency, which soon became worthless. On December 4, 1782, the Army decamped, leaving the Dexter farm and Providence.

The French campsite remained a well known site, and in 1865 a survey was made of the camp by Reverend Stone, assisted by Henry Davis. They were able to trace out and clearly define the sites of 313 huts, tents, and fire pits, and a map of their findings was published in <u>Our French Allies</u>. Later in the nineteenth century an effort was made to preserve the site since many of the physical remains of the camp were still visible. Unfortunately, all that came of this was the erection of a commerative plaque in 1911 on a small lot at the corner of Summit Avenue and Brewster Street several blocks from the Dexter house. Today, the Jeremiah Dexter farmhouse remains the only significant marker of the French campsite. Form No. 10-3008 (Rev. 10:74) UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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	Historic American Building Survey Sheet, J. H. Cady; 9/23/55.	
	Newman, S. C. <u>Dexter Family Geneology</u> . Providence, Rhode Island: A. Crawford Greene, 1859.	
••	reston, Howard W. <u>Rochambeau and the French Troops in Providence</u> in 1780-1781-1782. Providence, Rhode Island: 1924.	
ι	Rice, Howard C. and Anne S. K. Brown. <u>The American Campaigns of</u> <u>Rochambeau's Army</u> . 2 vols. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press and Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1972.	
	tone, Edwin M. <u>Our French Allies</u> . Providence, Rhode Island: Providence Press Company, 1884.	
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES **INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME John B. Nevin Estate	
STREET & NUMBER Mr. John Gorham, Attorney	58 Weybosset Street
city town Providence Vicinity of	state Rhode' Island
LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION	
COURTHOUSE. REGISTRY OF DEEDS ETC. Providence City Hall	·
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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Jeremiah Dexter House at 957 North Main Street is a rectangular, one-and-a-half story gambrel-roof structure built on a typical eighteenth century central chimney, five-room plan. It was measured and photographed for the Historic American Buildings Survey circa 1940.

Built in 1754 by Jeremiah Dexter, and one of the few remaining houses once typical of Providence farm building, the structure is of timber frame construction, set on a rough stone foundation, and was originally entirely clapboarded, although the ends are now shingled. The remaining clapboards are shiplapped and graduated in width, the wider boards toward the top. On the front a molded eaves cornice breaks forward to form the window and door caps; drawings show that originally at least some end windows also had molded caps.

The six-panel front door, which retains its original wrought-iron strap hinges and latch, is set in a plain enframement and has a fivepaned transom above. There are two windows at the left of the doorway, and one on the right. The narrow window frames are original. All originally had nine-over-nine sash, but the lower sashes now have single panes. The corners of the house are finished with beaded corner boards. The large central chimney is square in shape, and the top is articulated. A low cellar extends under all of the original structure. About 1850 a two-room one-story gable-roofed ell was added in the rear, the central room on the rear was expanded slightly with a bay, and a lean-to was added to the kitchen on the south. The roof of the house and ell is now covered with modern asphalt tiles.

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(see Continuation Sheet 1)

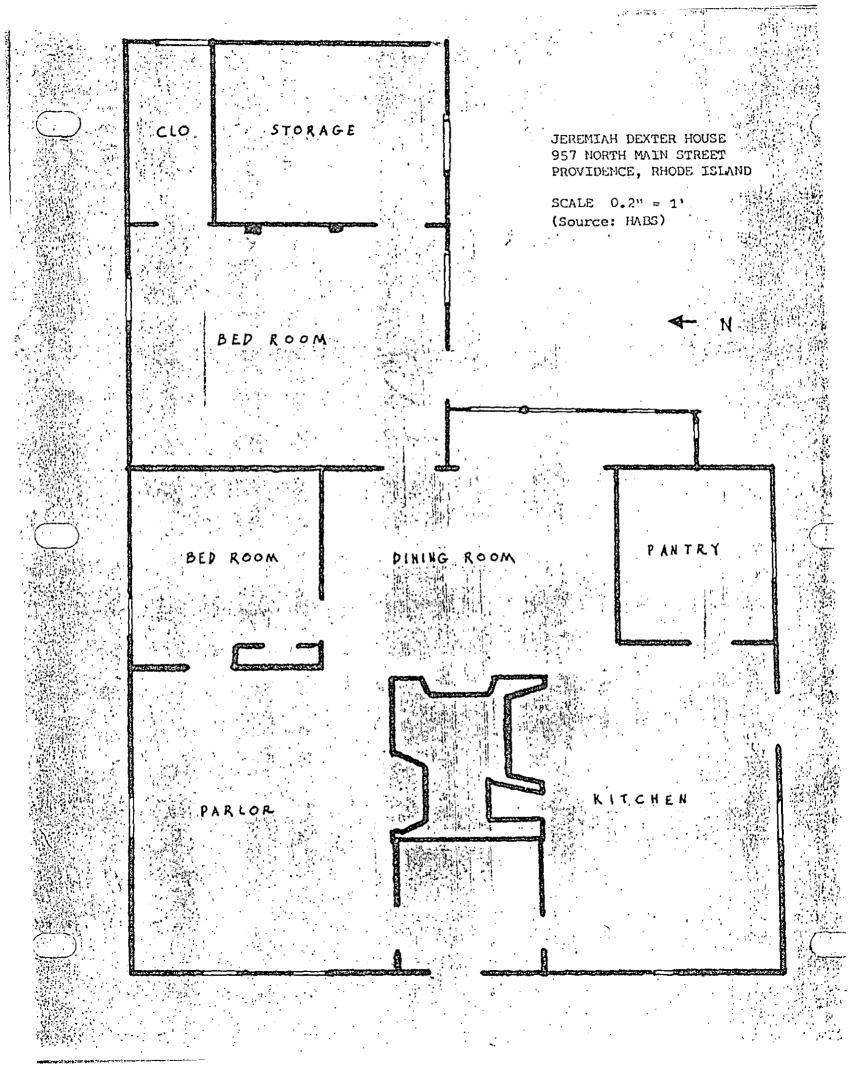
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which serves fireplaces on three sides. The kitchen, or keeping room, located on the southwest side of the house, contains a large splayed fireplace fitted with a crane, with a bake-oven set at the side front. The walls of this room have what is probably the original randomwidth vertical pine sheathing; the door on the south wall is sheathed on the inside with wide horizontal planks and retains its original wrought-iron strap hinges and latch. As in the rest of the first floor, the ceiling is plastered and the corner-posts are cased.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SIGNIFICANCE

The Jeremiah Dexter house is architecturally significant as an example of early Providence farmhouses; it is historically significant as the only survival of an early Providence farm settlement and because in 1782 the French Army under the command of Vicomte de Rochambeau chose the property as the site of their encampment while in the vicinity of Providence. It is now the most notable physical feature remaining in the City that can be linked to the French presence in Providence during the Revolution. Fortunately, the house is almost unaltered, and is thus a rare surviving example of a once common Providence

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The arrival of the French Army in Newport in mid-July of 1780, too late in the season to be of any offensive help to the American Army, necessitated their quartering in Rhode Island during the winter of 1780-1781. The Army left Rhode Island the following June to join General Washington's forces near Yorktown, Virginia, camping enroute on a plain in the southwestern section of Providence. In November of 1782, on the triumphant return march of the French Army from the decisive victory at Yorktown, this campground was again occupied. However, the owner of the site refused to permit the French to cut wood for fuel and barracks, and the following day Rochambeau marched his troops to a new encampment

(See continuation sheet 2)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

CONTINUATION SHEET 2

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The Dexter property was ideal for the camp. It was situated on high and well-aired ground and was located close enough to Providence and Pawtucket for the convenience of the commissaries, yet remote enough to create a buffer zone between the troops and the citizens of Providence. Reverend Edwin M. Stone in <u>Our French Allies</u> (1884). described the campground:

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The French campsite remained a well known site, and in 1865 a survey was made of the camp by Reverend Stone, assisted by Henry Davis. They were able to trace out and clearly define the sites of 313 huts, tents, and fire pits, and a map of their findings was published in <u>Our</u> <u>French Allies</u>. Later in the nineteenth century an effort was made to preserve the site since many of the physical remains of the camp were still visible. Unfortunately, all that came of this was the erection of a commerative plaque in 1911 on a small lot at the corner of Summit Avenue and Brewster Street several blocks from the Dexter house. Today, the Jeremiah Dexter farmhouse remains the only significant marker of the French campsite.

GPO 892 455

Form No. 10-3008 (Rgv +10-74)-

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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Jeremiah Dexter House 957 North Main Street, Providence, Rhode Island

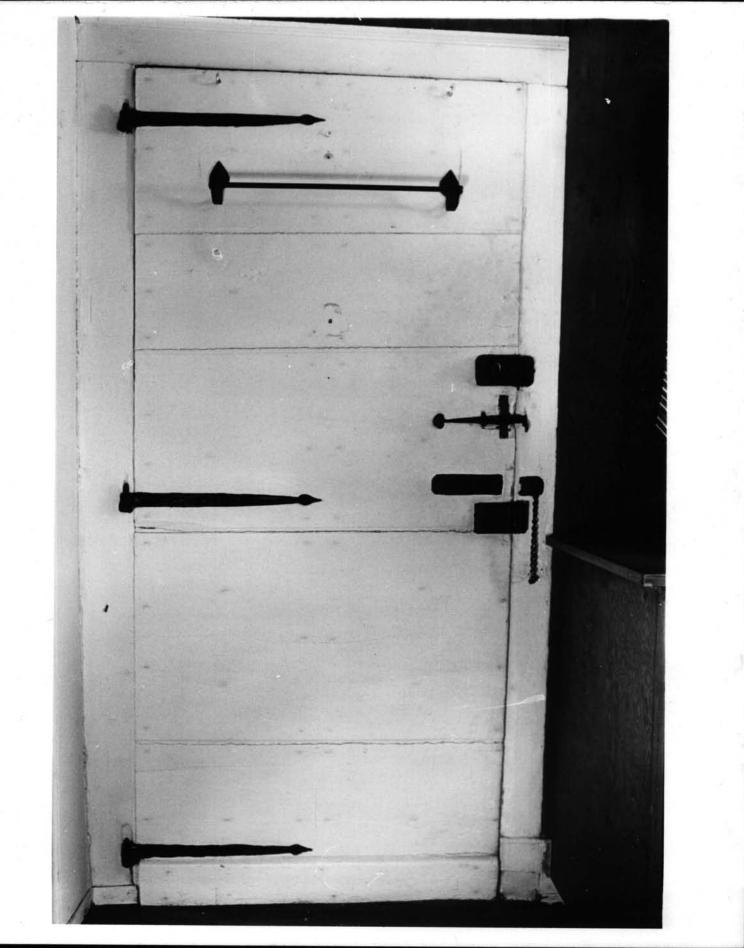
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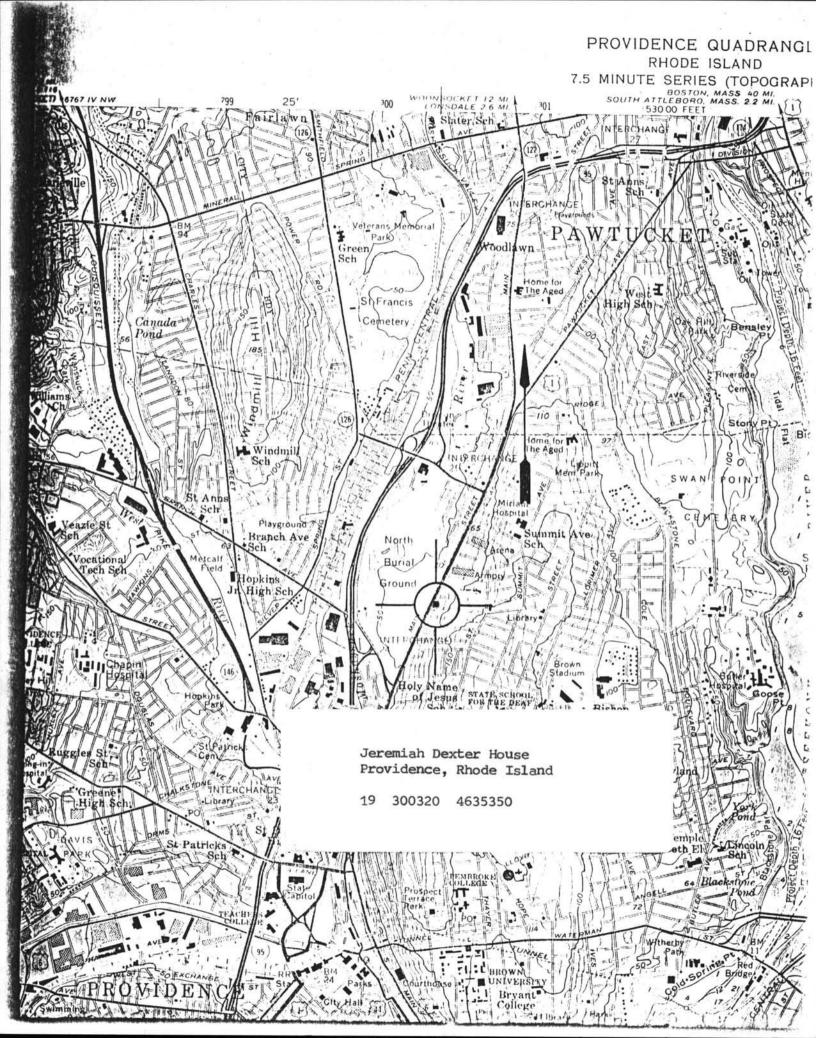


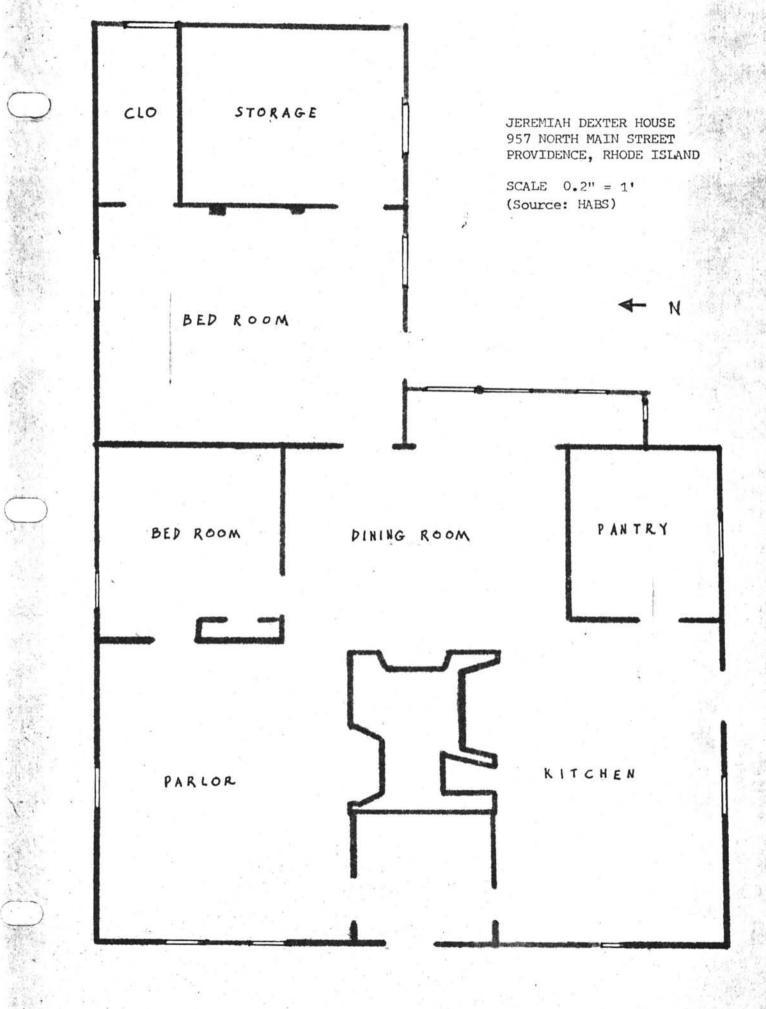


Jeremiah Dexter House 957 North Main Street, Providence, Rhode Island Photographer: B. Christopher Bene Date: 1972 Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Door from kitchen into southern lean-to.

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Jeremiah Dexter House 957 North Main Street, Providence, Rhode Island

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Exterior view from the southwest.

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