

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED DEC 6 1976
DATE ENTERED AUG 16 1977

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

Israel B. Mason House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

571 Broad Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Providence

VICINITY OF

2 Rep. Edward Beard

STATE

Rhode Island

CODE

44

COUNTY

Providence

CODE

007

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

Bell Funeral Home Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

571 Broad Street

CITY, TOWN

Providence

VICINITY OF

STATE

Rhode Island

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Providence City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

Dorrance and Washington Street

CITY, TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

DATE

July 1975

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 150 Benefit

CITY, TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island 02903

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 house constructed by wealthy merchant Israel Bowen Mason, at the northwest corner of Broad and Dartmouth Streets in 1888, is a superb essay in the American Queen Anne style. The mansion is a long, narrow, 2½-story rectangular block, modulated by bay windows, porches and verandas to produce a visually complex composition; its cross-gabled roof is pierced by numerous turrets, gables and dormers, adding to the overall picturesque effect. The house is set on a rusticated brownstone basement with red brick walls on the ground floor, red slate sheathing at the second floor, and a black slate roof. The small front lawns are densely landscaped with mature shrubs and enclosed by a hedge.

The principal elevations face east to Broad Street and south to Dartmouth Street. The Dartmouth Street elevation is the entrance front; here the expanse of the long, rectangular, 2½-story, flank-gable block is broken by a projecting, 3½-story, gabled, central pavilion. To the west of this two bay projection, the wall of the main block continues uninterrupted to the corner divided into three bays of unevenly spaced fenestration. Only the gabled dormer breaking the eaves line relieves the continuity of the facade. The western portion of the house contains the service areas.

East of the center pavilion, the facade is enriched by an elaborate porch extending to a 3-story octagonal tower with a tall peaked roof at the eastern corner of the building. Canted, brownstone steps give access to the porch from Dartmouth Street, and wide brownstone stairs at the east end lead up from Broad Street. The porch is composed of paired, wooden, Romanesque Revival colonnettes with carved capitals set on rusticated brownstone piers spanned by a wooden Romanesque Revival balustrade of arcaded colonnettes. The wood and plaster porch ceiling is divided into square panels ornamented with a raised geometric design. A pair of panelled natural oak doors provides the principal access to the mansion.

The visual impact of the porch is strengthened by the design of the house above, creating a cohesive vertical two-and-a-half-story bay unit. Above the porch, at the second floor level, a shallow columned loggia opens from the master bedroom suite onto an open deck formed by the porch roof. At attic level, the roofline is broken by a pair of dormers.

The transition from the south elevation to the east elevation is made by the octagonal corner tower. The tower rises from a curved, brick base at the ground floor level to become semi-octagonal and clad in slate with banded windows at the second floor. It breaks the eaves line with a band of fenestration at the third story, above which is the tapering, pointed, octagonal roof. The upper level of this tower

(See continuation sheet #1)

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is linked to a balancing three story bay window on the east elevation by a covered loggia that spans the gable at the third story level.

The north and west elevations are more simply composed, with fenestration and porches functionally located to respond to floor plan requirements. The north elevation has the most elaborate features. A stained glass oriel window between the first and second floor indicates the stair landing within, while a projecting central pavilion bisects the north elevation echoing the division of the south elevation and repeating the materials and geometric progression of the corner tower in its transition from a semi-circular brick base to semi-octagonal, slate-clad, upper level to a peaked slate roof. Beneath the oriel window is the north entrance to the house.

In spite of the complex geometry of the exterior, the plan of the house is quite simple. A central stair hall extending the width of the house is flanked by adjacent double reception rooms on the right, and by two rooms on the left, which are separated by a cross hall leading to the west service wing of the mansion. This central hall, four-room plan is repeated on the second floor, with the exception of the southern portion of the upper hall which is partitioned to form a sitting/dressing room for the master bedroom suite.

On the third floor, a ballroom occupies most of the main block, with the balance of the space given over to lesser bedrooms.

The interior finish and woodwork of the main section of the Mason house are superb. The principal entrance from Dartmouth Street, through a pair of panelled natural oak doors, leads into a vestibule; an inner pair of similar oak doors lead to the center hall, which is the most elaborately finished portion of the entire mansion. Designed as a living hall in the true American Queen Anne spirit, this room is of generous proportions, extending on a north-south axis through the house to a door located beneath the stair landing. The walls are panelled in natural oak. A built-in pier mirror fills the space between the wide doorways to the double reception rooms at the right of the hall, reflecting the hall fireplace located opposite it between the entrance to the dining room and the cross hall leading to the service wing. This fireplace is the most ornate in the house and is a highly original composition executed in natural wood with a five-part niched overmantel inset with a mirror. The ceiling is timbered with closely spaced wood beams spanning the width of the hall, and contains a

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handsome 20th century six-light crystal chandelier.

The rear portion of the living hall is devoted to the magnificent natural oak-carved staircase.

The stair ascends along the east wall to a landing extending the width of the hall which is lit by a stained glass oriel window; the second run reverses direction, ascending along the west wall to the second floor. The twisted balusters are closely spaced and support a ramped molded rail. The newel at the foot of the stairs in the first floor hall is a floral carved, square post containing the monogram of Israel B. Mason capped by an elaborate carved finial. A short flight of steps from the main hall leads to a lower level beneath the stair landing containing a pair of oak-panelled exterior doors. To the right of these doors tucked beneath the east run of the stairs is a small lavatory containing the original wood and marble fixtures.

To the right of the hall, double reception rooms are connected by a pair of oak-panelled pocket doors. The front reception room is wainscoted to a height of 3½ feet in natural oak with plain plaster walls above. The fireplace on the east wall has an elaborate Colonial Revival natural wood mantel surmounted by a mirror. A deep bay window adjacent to the fireplace in the east wall is framed by a wooden arch. The ceiling is finished in low relief plaster-work of Adamesque design. The rear reception room is finished in a manner similar to the first, except that the mantel on the north wall is of a different design and the east bay window is not enframed by an arch.

The front chamber to the left of the hall is the dining room. This is one of the largest and most elaborately finished rooms in the house signifying its importance as the center of family life and entertaining in the Victorian household. Unlike the reception rooms which demonstrate the influence of the Colonial Revival, the dining room, like the living hall, is pure American Queen Anne in conception. The geometry of the room is enriched by the canted corners that give the room its octagonal form; the shape of the bay window in the south wall is echoed by the corner fireplace in the northeast corner and the wood panelled vestibule screen in the northwest corner. The room is panelled in oak to a height of about eight feet with a deep classical plasterwork frieze above. The ceiling is divided by natural wood false timberwork into square panels containing plaster relief ornament. The corner fireplace has a wood mantel surmounted by leaded glass cupboards

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and mirrored panels with carved wood shell tops. The built-in buffet on the west wall is one of the finest pieces of carpentry in the mansion. Above a sideboard containing numerous panelled drawers and cupboards with brass mounts is a large mirror flanked by leaded glass cupboards and mirrored shelves. The entire buffet is unified with the adjacent pantry door by a motif of carved wood shell coves. The pantry itself has been totally remodelled into a modern office.

The rear reception room to the left of the hall is entered through the cross hall. This room is finished in a manner similar to the other reception rooms and contains a handsome, Colonial Revival style fireplace on the west wall surmounted by an oval mirrored overmantel. This room is also wainscoted to a height of 3½ feet and contains a delicate Adam style relief plaster ceiling. The rectangularity of the room is relieved by the bowed north window wall.

The cross hall leads west into the secondary stair hall which contains the entrances to the various service rooms occupying the west wing and an enclosed, vertical board, sheathed stair to the upper floors. The rooms in the west wing have been altered to accommodate the functions of the various funeral homes that have occupied the building since 1917.

The plan of the second floor is nearly identical to that of the first floor; the major difference is the dressing/sitting room created by partitioning the south end of the hall. The second floor hall fireplace is tucked into a corner on the west wall and has an elaborate Queen Anne/Colonial Revival wood mantel. The chamber over the dining room and the entire second floor of the west service wing have been totally remodelled to form a modern apartment for the owner and do not retain their original plan or finishes. The remaining three bed-chambers are in original condition and are similar in size and finish to their corresponding rooms on the first floor. Their wood mantels are carved in various Queen Anne/Colonial Revival designs, and only the mantel in the northwest chamber has been painted.

The staircase to the third floor rises over the well of the main stair to a landing and then continues along the west wall to the top floor. The third-floor ballroom occupies the space in the east gable end overlooking Broad Street. It is a large plain room with white plaster walls, built-in panelled seats and a coved ceiling ornamented

(See continuation sheet #4)

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with false timberwork. The balance of the third floor contains simply finished bedrooms.

The carriage house for the Mason property is on the northwest corner of the lot facing Dartmouth Street. Constructed at the same time as the mansion, the carriage house repeats the brick and slate materials of the house. It is a rectangular, two-story structure, capped by a hipped slate roof with a cupola ventilator at the peak. The interior was originally fitted with horse stalls but has since been converted for use as a garage; unfortunately the original carriage doors facing Dartmouth Street have been replaced by a modern roll-up garage door. The large west lawn between the house and carriage house has been converted into an asphalt parking lot.

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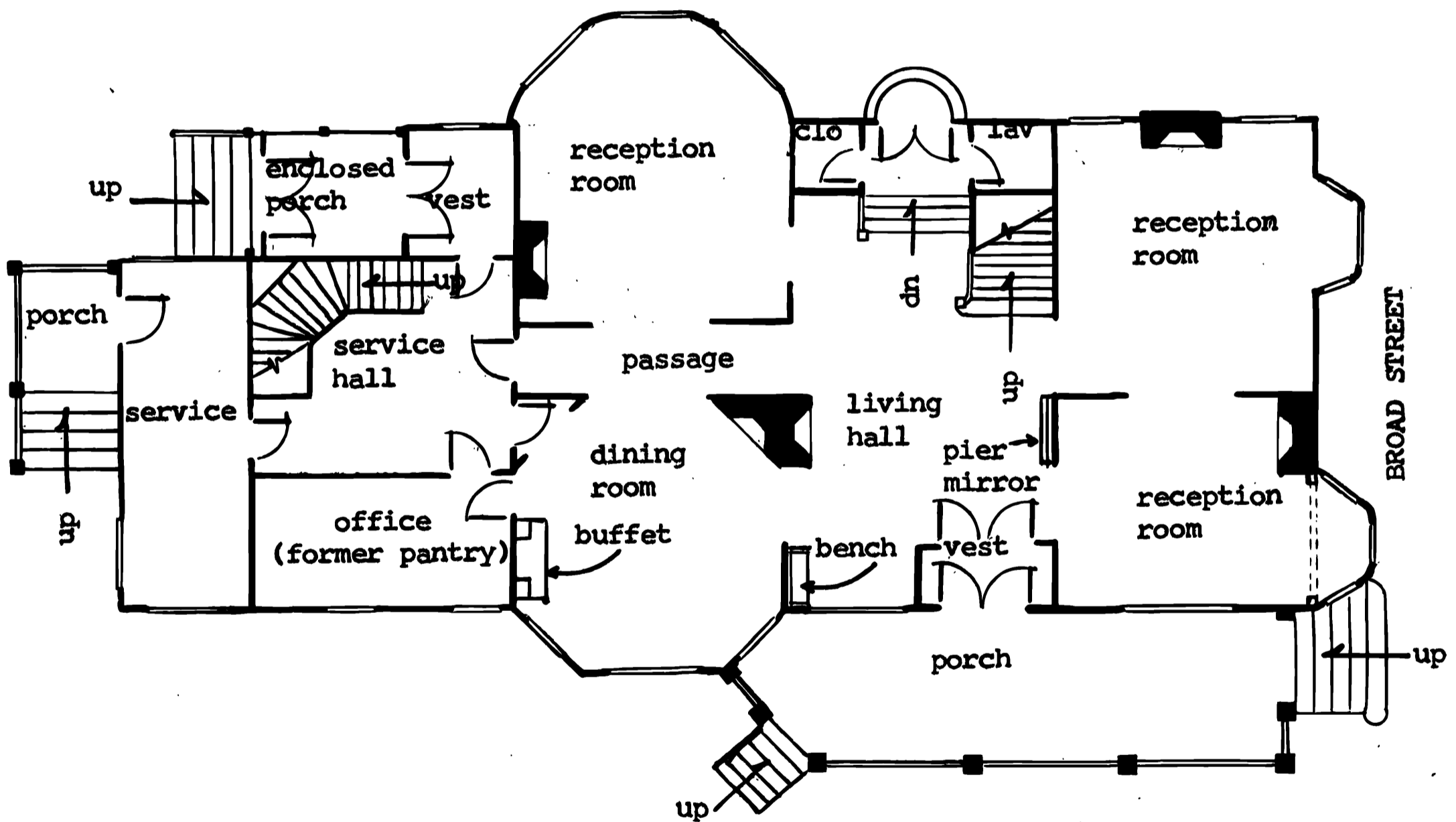
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DARTMOUTH STREET

FIRST FLOOR PLAN
not to scale



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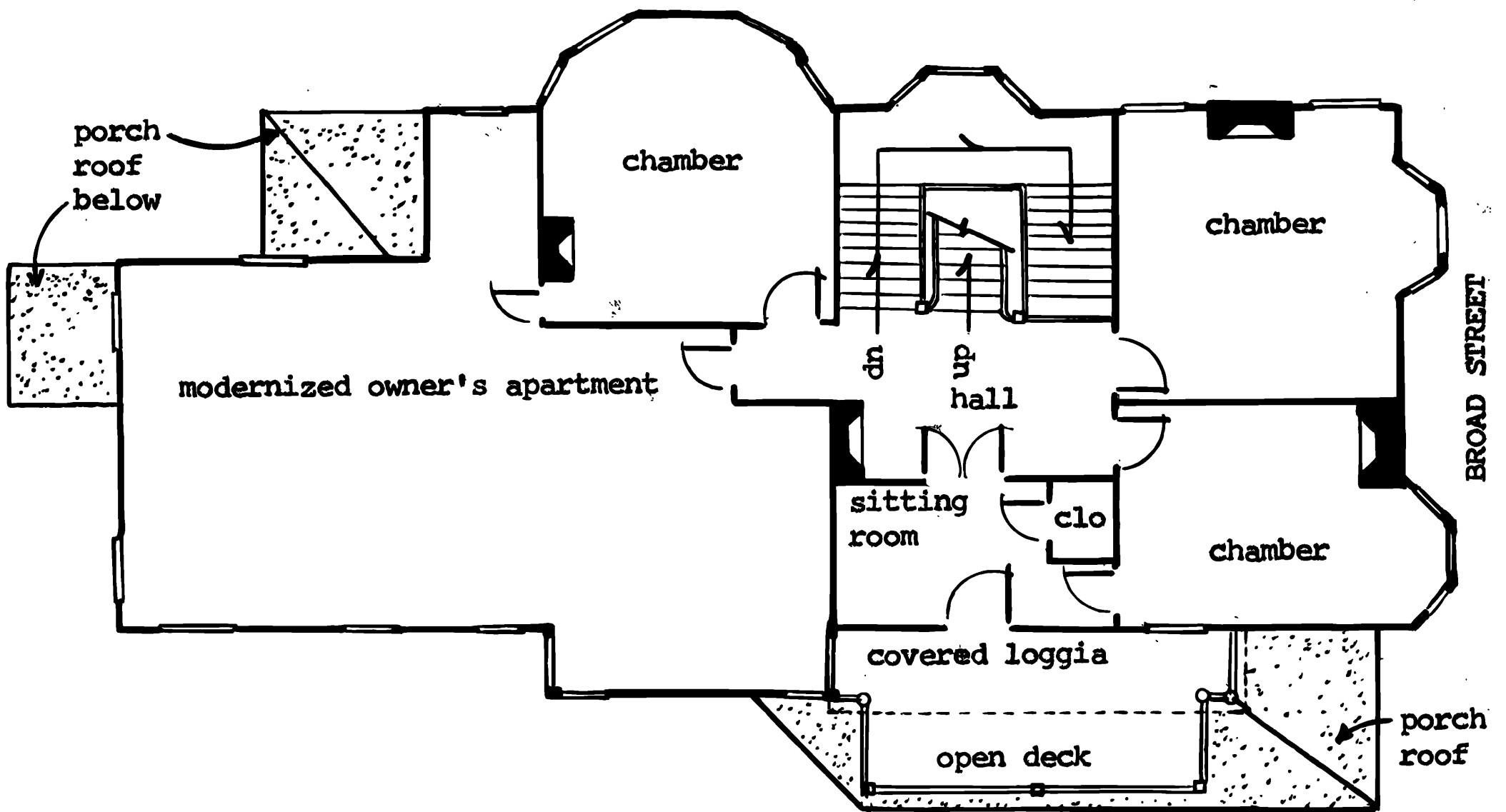
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DARTMOUTH STREET

SECOND FLOOR PLAN
not to scale



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 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 1888

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Alfred Stone, Architect

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Israel B. Mason house is significant both architecturally and historically; it is an unusually sophisticated work of locally prominent architect Alfred Stone, and embodies, in almost original condition, a type and quality of house representative of the urban development of the major boulevards of Providence's West Side in the decades following the Civil War.

The Mason house was designed in the American Queen Anne style by architect Alfred Stone, a partner in the Providence firm of Stone, Carpenter and Willson, which was active in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It provides an interesting comparison with examples of Stone's earlier work in the style, such as the 1883 Esther Baker house, listed on the National Register, at 170 Hope Street in Providence. The Mason house employs many of the same devices as the Baker house, such as the masonry and slate cladding, the use of towers and turrets and many of the same decorative motifs, but illustrates the evolution of the American Queen Anne style toward the Colonial Revival of the 1890's, in its more unified massing and the greater use of Georgian decorative detail, particularly on the interiors. The exterior design of the Mason house also clearly demonstrates the influence of the contemporary Romanesque Revival in the rusticated brownstone basement level, the porch detailing, and the use of Romanesque columns to support the oriel window on the north elevation. This house is one of the last large American Queen Anne houses designed by Stone, whose firm, Stone, Carpenter & Willson subsequently became the foremost practitioner of the Colonial Revival style in domestic architecture in Providence in the 1890's and early 1900's.

The Mason house is of historical importance as a remnant of earlier urban development trends on the West Side. Broad Street, one of the major thoroughfares in this area, remained an unimproved country lane until the time of the Civil War. In the 1860's Providence experienced great prosperity as an expanding mercantile and industrial center, and many new fortunes were established. Some of the nouveaux riches of this period gradually moved from the older East Side of Providence to the West Side, where they built magnificent homes along broad tree-lined avenues. The two grandest west side boulevards of the later nineteenth century were Broadway, already listed as a district on the National Register, and Broad Street.

(See continuation sheet #5)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Rhode Island Chapter of The American Institute of Architects Archives.
The Elmwood Foundation Files.
Representative Men and Old Families of Rhode Island J. H. Beers
Publisher, Chicago, 1908.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY ~~less than one~~
UTM REFERENCES

A	1 19	26 18 86 10	46 3 11 3 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

Leslie J. Vollmert

ORGANIZATION

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

DATE

Nov. 11, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

150 Benefit Street

TELEPHONE

401-277-2678

CITY OR TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island 02906

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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Frederick Williamson

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

November 29, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

Leslie J. Vollmert
Charles [unclear]

DATE

11/16/77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

8.21.77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Israel B. Mason, a self-made magnate in the provisions industry, was one of the earlier residents of Broad Street, having built his first house there prior to 1869. Mason's firm, I. B. Mason & Son was a major wholesale grocery and meatpacking concern in Providence into the early 20th century. Although he devoted most of his energies to his business enterprises, Mason found time to serve in the state legislature in 1879 and 1880. After entrusting control of the firm to his son Edward, he retired from active participation in I. B. Mason & Son in 1886, although he continued to be active in other business concerns until his death. Upon his retirement, Mason no longer found his earlier mansard roofed house an adequate reflection of his wealth and prominence. In 1887 he employed Alfred Stone of the firm of Stone, Carpenter and Willson to design a mansion to surpass in splendor the nearby Broad Street home of textile magnate B. B. Knight, which was considered to be one of the finest houses in Providence at the time. Mason's earlier house of the 1860's was moved across the street to 12 Dartmouth Street where it stands today, and the present mansion was completed in 1888. Mason occupied the house until his death in 1916 at the age of 84.

By 1916, Broad Street was in transition from exclusive residential to commercial land use. Stores and automobile showrooms were proliferating, as a result of the expansion of the retail district from downtown along the Broad Street Streetcar Line. So many residences were being converted to doctors' offices that Broad Street became facetiously known as "Pill Avenue" in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The large suburban houses gradually disappeared, including the B. B. Knight mansion, razed in 1916.

Indicative of the changing character of the neighborhood was the conversion of the Mason mansion to a funeral home upon its sale by the Mason heirs in 1917. The house has continuously served as a funeral home under varying names since that time and has been meticulously preserved and maintained without substantial alteration, as one of the last surviving reminders of this once grand boulevard of the nineteenth century. It is fortunate that probably the finest house ever built on Broad Street still survives amidst the present drab strip commercial development as a monument to the street's past splendor.