

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form



982

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Lewis Tower House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 2199 Mendon Road

N.A. not for publication

city, town Cumberland

vicinity of

#1 - Rep. Fernand J.

~~Congressional district~~

St Germain

state Rhode Island

code 44

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	N.A. 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 Ruth Creelman

street & number 415 Great Road

city, town Lincoln

N.A. vicinity of

state Rhode Island 02865

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Town Clerk, Cumberland Town Hall

street & number 45 Broad Street

city, town Cumberland

state Rhode Island 02864

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title See Continuation Sheet #1. has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date See Continuation Sheet #1. federal state county local

depository for survey records Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

city, town Providence

state Rhode Island

7. Description

Condition
 excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one
 unaltered
 altered

Check one
 original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Lewis Tower House is located east of Mendon Road (State Route 122), the old highway from Providence through the Blackstone River Valley, in a once-isolated rural area which has undergone suburban development over the past thirty years. It is an L-shaped, one-and-one-half-story, timber-frame structure with gable roofs and clapboard-sheathed walls, set on a sloping, partly terraced lot with the basement at grade on the front (west side) and the first floor just above grade on the remaining sides (see photo #1). The terrace retaining walls and flanks of the basement front are of granite ashlar, while the basement front itself is of brick, painted white, with granite door and window sills and lintels. An L-shaped veranda, two stories tall in front and one story on the south side, wraps around the house. It is formed by extensions of the roof slopes supported by square posts. Except for the upper level across the front, this veranda has no floor; the supports on the lower level of the front and on the south rest on footings in the ground. The front portion of the house has a five-bay facade, one-bay sides, and a central entranceway, while the rear ell has four asymmetrical bays on both the north and south sides, with doors in the bay nearest the front on the north (sheltered by a small vestibule) and in one of the center bays on the south. Each wing has a brick center chimney. The house has undergone few changes, most of which have been sympathetic to its architectural character. Its surroundings include a wooden picket fence with granite posts along the road, a number of informally planted mature trees, a mid-nineteenth-century bucket hoist over a well near the house, a privy, a stone foundation of a barn destroyed by the 1938 hurricane, and an early twentieth-century garage.

In plan, the house resembles two center-chimney, two-room-plan houses joined at right angles, end to back, with a little extra width to accommodate tiny rooms behind the chimneys. In the front section, the main entrance--with sidelights and narrow pilasters surmounted by a broad, flat entablature band with a molded cornice and impost-like blocks over the pilasters--opens into a vestibule. The adjoining rooms to the left (north) and right (south), now used as a bedroom and living room, respectively, were probably used originally as the parlor and dining room. Both rooms have plastered walls, cased corner posts, and fireplaces with one-story Federal-style mantels. The mantels are composed of architrave surrounds framing the fireboxes with broad frieze panels above containing impost-like blocks supporting the mantel shelves (photo #3). In each room a shallow closet is located next to the fireplace, on the sides opposite the doorways to the vestibule. The old parlor (present bedroom) has shutters on the windows with louvers in the lower leaves and beveled panels in the upper ones.

(See Continuation Sheet #1).

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Continuation sheet 1

Item number 6 & 7

Page 2

In the ell the southern entrance, topped by a transom light, opens into a vestibule and stair hall containing an enclosed, steep staircase with winders leading up to the attic. The attics of the ell and front section are connected and have plastered ceilings and partitions dividing the space into bedrooms arranged en suite, now used only for storage by the present occupants of the house. On the first floor, the room to the left (west) of the vestibule is the kitchen. It has plastered walls and cased corner posts and the plastered ceiling has been removed to expose the joists above. Behind a modern wood stove the original cooking fireplace remains intact, with a bake oven and wood box to one side behind a paneled door and a cupboard over the mantel (photo #4). A small pantry opens off the northwest corner of the kitchen, occupying space in the front section behind the chimney. The room to the right (east) off the ell vestibule is a small bedroom and a bathroom is located in the small space behind the chimney between the kitchen and bedroom. The bedroom has a fireplace with a cupboard above it. Both the kitchen and bedroom fireplaces have simple flat-board mantels.

The front part of the basement, which opens out to the lower grade of the terraced yard through a central doorway, is unfinished, leaving its original use in question. It has an uneven floor partly covered with cement and partly dirt, fieldstone walls partly covered with cement, a brick partition separating it from the basement section under the ell, and two slab-like brick piers topped by hewn timbers supporting the center chimney above.

6. Representation in Existing Surveystitle: Preliminary Survey Report--Town of Cumberland

date: March 1977

title: Phase I Cultural Resources Reconnaissance Survey for the
Reconstruction of Mendon Road, Route 122, Cumberland, RI

July 1981

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 ca 1825

Builder/Architect

N.A.

Statement of Significance (In one paragraph)

The Lewis Tower House is a handsome and well preserved example of domestic architecture of the early nineteenth century, possibly with an earlier section, and is especially notable for its unusual form and siting. Its terraced yard and grade-level basement front are atypical, as is the extensive veranda, a feature found on eighteenth- or early nineteenth-century structures in other parts of the United States but not generally seen in Rhode Island in the pre-Victorian era. These elements appear to be integral components of the original configuration of the Tower House, making the building an important example of a non-standard Rhode Island dwelling type. Should future research prove that they are later alterations, they are still significant for their contribution to the house's special architectural character.

Current research indicates that the house was probably standing when Lewis Tower purchased a 19-acre farmstead here from Philip Thomas in 1833. The main entrance and the fireplace mantels in the front rooms are typical of Rhode Island work of the 1820s and would seem to indicate a construction date in that decade. Several features of the rear ell-- its independent framing system, southern orientation, cramped enclosed staircase, narrow-proportioned windows on the north side, and massive stone chimney foundation different from the brick-pier foundation of the chimney in the front section--are characteristic of colonial building practices in the area and suggest that the ell may predate the front section and that the latter is an addition to the former. Further research is required to substantiate this theory. Should it prove to be true, then the house would be even more significant for the evidence it gives of architectural evolution through a period of time.

Otherwise, the Tower House has undergone only minor changes, such as the removal of the kitchen ceiling and the rehangng of interior doors on newer hinges. Changes to its environment include the destruction of the barn by the 1938 hurricane and the selling off of the surrounding acreage in 1952. However, the house itself and its immediate surroundings strongly evoke its original nineteenth-century rural character, making the Tower House an important local cultural resource.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Nebiker, Walter, PRELIMINARY SURVEY REPORT--TOWN OF CUMBERLAND
(Providence: RIHPC, March 1977).

Land Evidence Records research by property occupants, Mr. & Mrs. Paul Harnod.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property approximately 2.5 acres

Quadrangle name Pawtucket

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	9	2	9	7	5	6	0	4	6	4	7	3	3	5
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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D

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is coextensive with lot 147 in assessor's plat 35 as defined by the Town of Cumberland.

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 Robert O. Jones, Jr., Senior Historic Preservation Planner

organization Rhode Island Historical Pres. Comm date February 1982

street & number 150 Benefit Street telephone 401-277-2678

city or town Providence state Rhode Island

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

Frank A. Williams

title

date

7.9.82 (see letter)



Lewis Tower House

2199 Mendon Road
Cumberland, Rhode Island

Sketch plan - not to scale

