

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received 007 24 1980

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NOV 28 1980

Continuation sheet 35

Item number 7

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NAME: Bicknell-Armington Lightning Splitter House

LOCATION: 3591 Pawtucket Avenue

OWNER: John Emigh
3591 Pawtucket Avenue
East Providence, R.I. 02915

DESCRIPTION:

The Bicknell-Armington Lightning Splitter House stands on a large lot at the southwest corner of Pawtucket and Willett Avenues (State Route 103), opposite the Whitcomb Farm (see inventory sheet) in a suburban neighborhood containing predominantly twentieth-century residences. The most notable feature of this wood-frame dwelling is its steeply pitched, two-story gable roof of a type found on several houses in the Greater Providence area. The house is set on a high stone foundation which is largely above grade on the south and west sides; a one-story ell runs off the basement on the south and extends beyond the west wall of the structure. Supposedly constructed in 1827, the house was either greatly altered ca. 1850 or was in fact constructed at the later date. Exterior walls are covered with asbestos shingles, but the original clapboards exist underneath. A pilaster-trimmed Greek Revival doorway is set at the northern end of the three-bay front (east side). The facade diminished to two bays at second-floor level and one bay at third-floor level. There are three rooms and a tiny entry hall on the first floor, two rooms on the second floor, and two rooms on the third floor. Interior trim is a highly simplified version of the Greek Revival style.

DATES: 1827 ? ca. 1850 ?

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Bicknell-Armington Lightning Splitter House is architecturally significant as a reasonably well preserved example of an idiosyncratic local dwelling type. Perhaps half a dozen narrow houses with unusually steep gable roofs exist in Providence and vicinity, many of them, curiously enough, earlier structures altered during the mid-nineteenth century, the remainder built about the same time. The eccentric roofs of these houses reflect the superstitious belief that the sharp peaks would split and deflect any lightning bolts that might strike them--hence the name "Lightning Splitter." These bizarre dwellings are important relics of a defunct building practice with strong ties to local folk culture.

ACREAGE: less than one acre

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: Assessor's Plat 61, Lot 58

UTM: 19: 303600: 4627470

(See Continuation Sheet #36).

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LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

(See Continuation Sheet #37).