

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island
COUNTY: Providence
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE MAY 1 1974

1. NAME

COMMON:
Foster Center Historic District

AND/OR HISTORIC:
"Foster Centre"

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
See Continuation Sheet 1

CITY OR TOWN:
Foster

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
#2: Robert O. Tiernan

STATE:
Rhode Island

CODE:
44

COUNTY:
Providence

CODE:
007

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
multiple

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Foster

STATE:
Rhode Island

CODE:
44

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Town Clerk's Office

STREET AND NUMBER:
South Killingly Road

CITY OR TOWN:
Foster

STATE:
Rhode Island

CODE:
02825 44

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Statewide Survey (see Continuation Sheet #5)

DATE OF SURVEY: 1969 and 1973 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:
52 Power Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Providence

STATE:
Rhode Island

CODE:
02906 44

STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Foster Center Historic District is a small cluster of houses, public buildings, and other structures cohesively related through their common history and through their embodiment of a common vernacular architectural tradition. The District includes most of the hamlet of "Foster Centre," a social and commercial focus for the surrounding area from the mid-eighteenth century onward and the seat of Foster's town government from its incorporation in 1781.

The town of Foster grew up on land purchased from the Narragansett Indians in 1662 by William Vaughan of Newport, Zachariah Rhodes of Pawtuxet, and Robert Westcott of Warwick, in the name of the Westconnaug Company. Other influential Newport men soon joined the Company.

The land to the north of this Westconnaug Purchase was owned by the Providence Proprietors. Inevitably, as purchasers began to survey and claim these western lands after the conclusion of King Philip's War in 1677, land-right disputes arose between the two companies. Following the satisfactory resolution of these disputes in 1708, three successive drawings for 150-acre lots were held to apportion the 32,000 acres of Westconnaug.

The growth of roads in Foster is indicative of early settlement concentrations. Plainfield Pike, four miles to the south of the Historic District, was in use as early as 1709 and was established as a legal highway by act of the General Assembly in 1711. In 1720 a road was laid out through Westconnaug running from the land of the Providence Proprietors south and west to Killingly, Connecticut. It was beside this Killingly Road that the first town pound in Foster (at that time a part of Scituate) was erected in 1732. This stone-walled pound, forty-eight feet square with a heavy lintel hewn of Foster granite and a brook "big enough to fish in" running through its southwest corner, is in surprisingly good condition today. It marks the southwestern bound of the Foster Center Historic District.

About 650 feet to the northeast along the Killingly Road stands the Hammond House, built by Stephen Colegrove in 1756 on land he had purchased one year earlier. Colegrove's house was very likely the first built in Foster Center and is known by the name of its fourth owner, tavern-keeper Thomas Hammond, who bought house, barn, and one-hundred-acre farm in 1767. Today the Hammond House stands out more for its historic associations than for its architecture. It was originally a generously-proportioned gable-roofed house with five-bay facade, center chimney, and five-room floor plan. Changes in the

(See Continuation Sheet - 1)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) - 1

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 1 1974

(Number all entries)

2. Location

Beginning at the northern bound of the District, where plat 20 lot 46 meets the eastern side of Foster Center Road; following the northern bound of lot 46 eastward to its meeting with the course of Old Foster Center Road; thence in a straight line drawn across plat 9 lot 14 to the northeast to meet the southwestern corner of plat 20 lot 39; thence southerly following a straight line drawn from this corner to the northeast corner of plat 20 lot 47. Thence east along the northern bound of plat 20 lot 48; then following south the eastern bound of lot 48 and continuing to the north side of Foster Center Road; thence northwesterly along the north side of the Road approximately 50 feet to a point in line with the eastern bound of plat 20 lot 5. Thence across the Road and following the eastern and then southern bounds of lot 5 to Howard Hill Road. Thence in a straight line drawn from this point across plat 20 lot 9 to the southeastern corner of plat 20 lot 10. Thence following the southeast and southwest bounds of lot 10 continuing in a straight line to the west side of South Killingly Road. Thence following the west side of the road north to the southwest corner of plat 20 lot 13; then following the southwest bound of lot 13 to the northwest and continuing in a straight line to a depth of 200 feet; thence in a straight line northeast to the northwest corner of lot 12, following the northern bound of lot 12 to its northeast corner; thence continuing in direct line the northeast bound of lot 12 to the northwest to meet a point in line on the northern bound of plat 20 lot 13. Thence following to the east said northern bound of lot 13 to a point due south of the southwest corner of plat 20 lot 16; from this point in a straight line due north to the southwest corner of lot 16; then following to the north and then to the east the western and northern bounds of lot 16 to their meeting with the western side of Foster Center Road. Thence in a straight line drawn from this point across the road to the northwest corner of plat 20 lot 46.

7. Description

Greek Revival period included the restyling of the front door and corner boards and, probably, the addition of the small eastern ell. Early-twentieth-century changes were far more damaging: the removal of the great central chimney and concomitant interior remodelling.

Farther up the road stands the Welcome Rood Tavern on a small triangle of land bounded by old Killingly Road, present

(See Continuation Sheet - 2)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) - 2

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
1147	1974

(Number all entries)

7. Description

Killingly Road, and Foster Center Road. This is a very plain clapboarded two-and-a-half-story house with a one-story ell to the west (formerly a grain shed) and a pair of ells set at right angles to each other to the east. This pair of ells are the earliest sections of the house, probably dating from the closing decades of the eighteenth century. They may have been built by Nehemiah Angell, an early tavern keeper in town who served as Town Clerk from 1796 to 1803. Rood purchased the house from Angell in the early 1800's and thereafter built the main two-and-a-half story section of the house to serve as a tavern and general store.

Incorporated in this section is a fascinating second-story chamber designed specifically for Hamilton Lodge #15 of Freemasons, who occupied it in 1825. The room had a barrel-vaulted ceiling whose plaster arch and exposed framing are still visible in the attic above a later flat ceiling. The walls above chair-rail level are decorated with stencilled patterns typical of the early and middle 1800's: willow trees alternating with compass-point motifs, a central heart with leaves growing from it, and a cornice of stylized daisies. Similar stencilling was found in a downstairs room but had deteriorated beyond hope of restoration.

Other houses in the Foster Center Historic District noteworthy as much for their historical associations as for their architecture are the Ely Aylsworth House and the Dr. Mowry Arnold House. Aylsworth, another early tavern keeper and an active real estate broker, purchased his five-bay central chimney colonial house in 1824. It served as post office in 1851 and currently houses the Foster Police Headquarters and the Town Council Chamber. Twentieth-century changes have altered the house extensively. The Mowry Arnold House, a much-enlarged early-19th-century "cape," was purchased in 1830 by Dr. Mowry Arnold, practitioner of medicine in Foster for sixty years, as well as school commissioner for forty-six years and town treasurer for twenty-three years. The Arnold farm straddles the path of old Foster Center Road, with house on one side and contemporaneous barn on the other.

The Town Meeting House is the outstanding public building in Foster Center. It was built in 1796 to house the Second Baptist Church in Foster, which had seceded from the First Baptist Church in 1780 under the leadership of Elder John Hammond (brother to tavern-keeper Thomas). In 1801 the congregation permitted the building to be used for the Town

(See Continuation Sheet - 3)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) - 3

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER MAY 1 1974	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. Description

Meeting, a usage which led the church to deed the building to the Town in 1822, provided that the Town would maintain it and allow its continued use as a place of Christian worship. The Town House, as it subsequently became known, is still used for the annual financial town meeting. It is a large gable-roofed clapboarded building two stories high and five bays wide with a central flat-headed double door. It is set at the top of Howard Hill facing west. The interior architectural treatment, with simple pews on three sides and second-story gallery, is typical of rural Rhode Island church building during this period.

The Baptists eventually built another church in the Center in 1882. This is a good example of a vernacular adaptation of Greek Revival architectural forms and is at once surprising and typical of rural Rhode Island in its very retardataire stylistic usage.

The Foster Center Public Library, originally a one-room schoolhouse built sometime before 1847, also follows the simple lines and gable-end orientation of Greek Revival tradition. Closed in 1952 when a regional school system was instituted, the building was restored and re-opened as the town library in 1957. Two well-executed unobtrusive modern additions (1964 and 1970) have permitted its continued growth.

The Town Clerk's Office (built in 1904), the small woodshed Jail (built c. 1910), and the Baptist Church parsonage (built c. 1882 and now a private residence) are other small public buildings stylistically derivative from the Greek Revival period.

8. Significance

The District's unique significance, however, is greater than the sum of these diverse elements. It is the preservation of a living sense of the past. Time has dealt kindly with Foster Center. Some alterations to individual buildings have inevitably occurred. A few nondescript twentieth century houses have been built within the District. But the Center maintains its basic historic and architectural integrity.

The area has not been closed in from its surrounding vistas of woods, hills, and fields. Those structures which have been built since Foster Center's most populous days of the 1820's are very much a logical extension of earlier local ar-

(See Continuation Sheet -4)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) - 4

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 1 1974

(Number all entries)

8. Significance

chitectural traditions and have been carefully placed in relation to pre-existent roads and structures. There are few discordant notes in the District, little to call attention to the tremendous span of years and of history that its twenty-odd structures reflect. The 1904 Town Clerk's Office blends equally well with the pre-1847 School House, the 1796 Town House, and the 1756 Hammond House.

Foster Center Historic District preserves in itself a unified portrait of, and to some extent the quality of life in, a rural Rhode Island town of 150 years ago. The hamlet of Foster Center exists in relation to the land much as it always has. It is an unspoiled phenomenon of increasing scarcity in our age of encroaching metropolis.

9. Bibliography

- Henshall, Helen Bemis: Foster (Typewritten manuscript in Foster Center Library, c. 1962).
- The Hinterlander, Bulletin of the Western Rhode Island Civic Historical Society (Rhode Island, various issues 1957 to the present).
- Howard, Daniel: History of the Town House (Handwritten manuscript owned by Helen Henshall, 1826).
- Ladies of the Foster Center Fire Auxiliary: Foster, R.I. (Foster, 1963).
- Matthews, Margery: Notes on Foster History (personal compilation in her possession).
- Old Home Day at Foster Centre, R. I., 1st Observance (Foster, September 15, 1904).
- Smith, Howard Bucklin: The Westconnaug Purchase (Manuscript read before the Western Rhode Island Civic Historical Society, 1947).
- Walker, Cyrus: The History of Scituate, R.I. (Handwritten manuscript in North Scituate Town Clerk's Office, c. 1900).

Maps

- Davenport, Isaac (with corrections and additions by Theodore Foster): Plan of the Town of Foster by Conjecture from the Best Information (Foster, June 20, 1799). Hand-drawn map in Rhode Island Historical Society Manuscripts, Vol, VII.
- Foster, Town of: Plat 9 and Plat 20 (Town Clerk's Office, Foster Center).
- Matteson, George E.: Foster, R. I. (Hope, Rhode Island, 1971). Plan of the Town of Foster by Conjecture (Foster, Rhode Island, October 2, 1781). Hand-drawn map in Rhode Island Historical

(See Continuation Sheet - 5)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) - 5

STATE	
Rhode Island	
COUNTY	
Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 1 1976

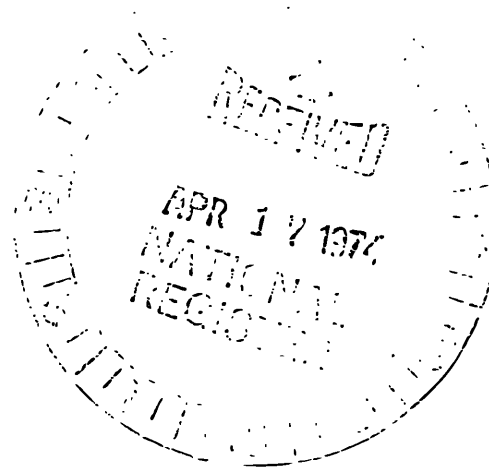
(Number all entries)

9. Bibliography

Society Manuscripts, Vol. VII.
Walling, Henry F.: Map of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations (New York, 1855 and 1862).

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Historic American Buildings Survey RI-38
1958 Federal
Library of Congress
Independence Avenue and 1st Street, S.E.
Washington District of Columbia



8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political ✓	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Industry 1/1/63	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture ✓	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce <i>STRUGGLE</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The Foster Center Historic District is significant for its long history as a focus of community life in western Rhode Island. The local convenience of the Center was first indicated in 1732 when Scituate erected its town pound beside the Killingly Road. Thomas Hammond operated his tavern as early as 1770 and at least one other tavern had opened by 1800. Welcome Rood's Tavern also served as the Center's first general store from the early 1800's until the end of the century. Reuben Hammond ran a thriving blacksmith business in the Center from 1825 onward as did Job Randall nearly a century later.

The Center has always been the seat of Foster's government. The first town meeting, November 19, 1781, was held in Thomas Hammond's tavern, as were many of the early meetings. After 1801 Town Meetings were held in the Baptist Meeting House; they are still held there today. Until 1904 the Town Clerk's Office was located in the home of each subsequent Town Clerk. The Welcome Rood Tavern may have housed this office twice: probably from 1796 to 1803 when Nehemiah Angell was Town Clerk, and definitely in the 1870's when George Phillips held the office.

The Town House is a visible reminder of the Center's dual importance as a civic and religious center. Its shared occupancy for almost all of the 19th century embodies a continuing spirit of cooperation between civil and religious interests in town. For example, the church's first Elder, John Hammond, was also appointed the Town of Foster's first pound keeper.

Architecturally the Foster Center Historic District is important not for any unusual flourishes or refinements, but rather for its continued and clear development of a local style over a period of approximately 150 years. This style is characterized by good proportions, simplicity of line, and careful craftsmanship worked in the local materials of Foster-cut wood and stone.

(See Continuation Sheet - 3)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Bayles, Richard M., ed.: History of Providence County, Rhode Island (New York, 1891).
 Beaman, Charles C.: Sketches of Foster (Providence Gazette, 1859 ?).
 Cady, J. H.: Historic American Buildings Survey RI - 38 (Washington, D. C., 1958).
 Federal Writer's Project: Rhode Island, A Guide to the Smallest State (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1937).
Foster (Mimeographed folder in Foster Center Library).
 (See Continuation Sheet - 4)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	41° 47' 18"	71° 43' 25"		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	41° 47' 16"	71° 43' 05"				
SE	41° 46' 55"	71° 43' 09"				
SW	41° 46' 57"	71° 43' 29"				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **42 acres**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Ancelin V. Lynch

ORGANIZATION: **Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission** DATE: **April 1, 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER:
52 Power Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Providence** STATE: **Rhode Island** CODE: **02906**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name: *Ancelin V. Lynch*
 Title: **State Historic Preservation Officer**
 Date: **APR 12 1974**

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

A. R. Montrose
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: *5/1/74*

ATTEST:
W. J. [Signature]
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: *4.30.74*

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

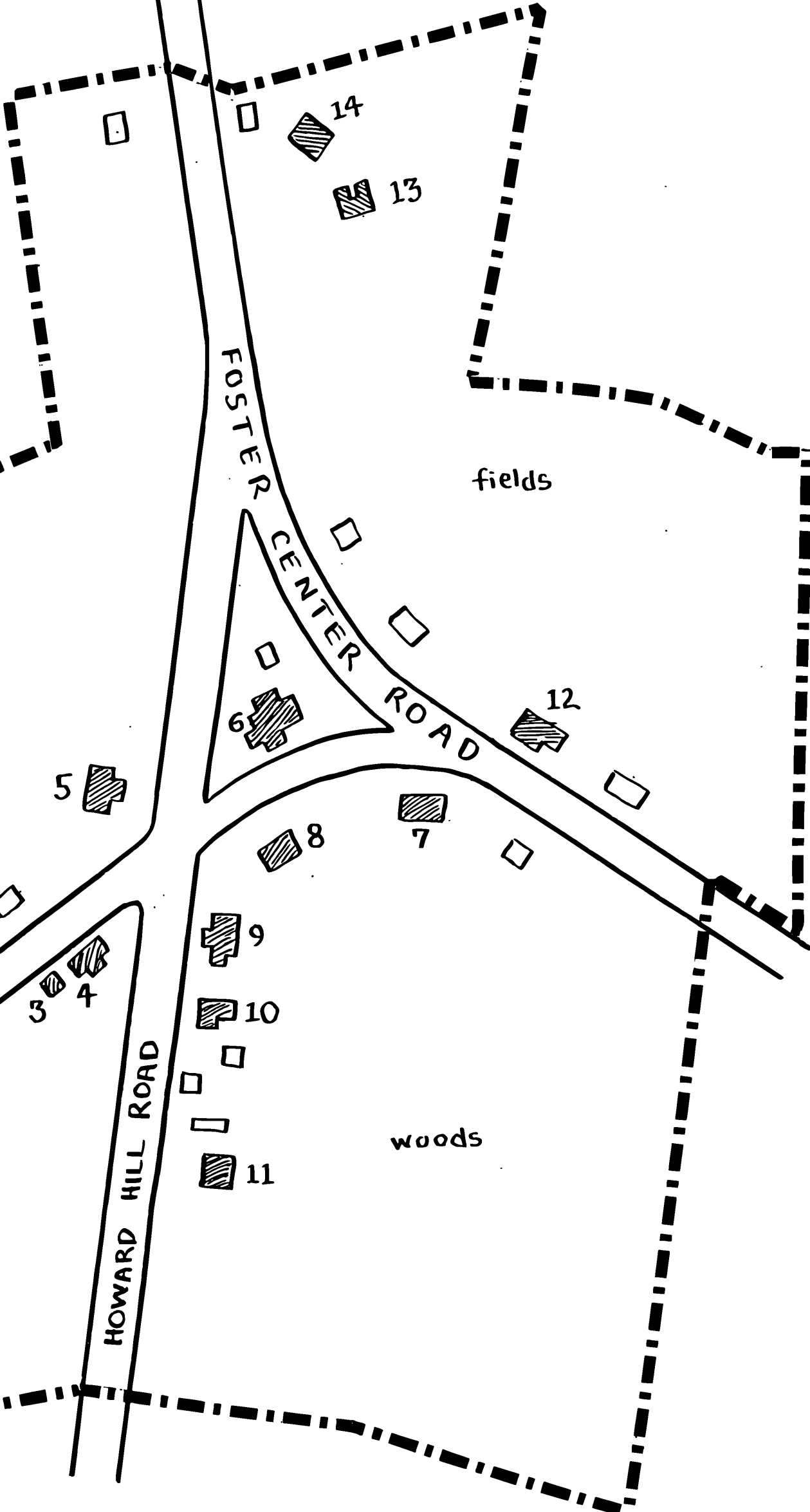
FOSTER CENTER HISTORIC DISTRICT

BUILDINGS OF LESSER SIGNIFICANCE: □

BOUNDARY OF DISTRICT: - · - · - · - · - ·



MILL ROAD



woods and fields

fields

woods and fields

woods

SOUTH KILLINGLY ROAD

HOWARD HILL ROAD

FOSTER CENTER ROAD

not drawn to scale

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE		Rhode Island
COUNTY		Providence
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE	
		APR 1 1974

(Number all entries)

Foster Center Historic District
Selective Inventory
Key to District Map

<u>Map Number</u>	<u>Name and Date</u>
1	Town Pound, 1732
2	Thomas Hammond House, 1756
3	Foster Town Jail, c. 1910 (moved)
4	Town Clerk's Office--"Benjamin Eddy Building," 1904
5	Foster Center Baptist Church, 1882
6	Welcome Rood Tavern, c. 1780; main section c. 1820
7	Job Randall's Blacksmith Shop, c. 1901
8	Baptist Parsonage, c. 1882
9	Foster Center Public Library--"Hemlock School," before 1847
10	Ely Aylsworth House, c. 1780
11	Town House--"Baptist Meeting House," 1796
12	Hopkins House, c. 1800
13	Dr. Mowry Arnold House, c. 1800
14	Arnold Farm Barn, c. 1830

