

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

JUN 21 1988

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Sheldon House
other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 458 Scituate Avenue n/a not for publication
city, town Cranston n/a vicinity
state Rhode Island code RI county Providence code 007 zip code 02920

3. Classification

| | | | |
|---|---|--|------------------------|
| Ownership of Property | Category of Property | Number of Resources within Property | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | Contributing | Noncontributing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local | <input type="checkbox"/> district | 1 | buildings |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State | <input type="checkbox"/> site | | sites |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal | <input type="checkbox"/> structure | | structures |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> object | | objects |
| | | 1 | Total |

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Frank Wilkerson Signature of certifying official Date 6/18/88
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Beth L. Gause Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 1-5-89

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

COLONIAL

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONEwalls WOOD/weather board

roof ASPHALTother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Sheldon House is a clapboarded, one-and-a-half-story, four-bay, gambrel-roofed house with a brick center chimney. Built c. 1728, this is the oldest and largest of four one-and-a-half-story gambrel-roofed houses standing along the southern side of Scituate Avenue west of its intersection with Phenix Avenue. The house is set back perpendicular to the road and faces east. South of the house stand a well-head and a horse barn. To the east of the house is the 1804 Sheldon House (not included in this nomination) and to the west are acres of uncultivated fields and overgrown apple and walnut orchards that were once part of a large farm centered around these structures. The family burial ground (Cranston Historical Cemetery #19) is now part of an adjacent house lot to the west.

Two small dormers are set in roof on the front. The windows have mostly eight-over-eight and twelve-over-twelve sash. The window enframements on the north side display vernacular splayed window caps. The simple plank door with two-light transom is set asymmetrically in the facade, which arrangement may indicate that the Sheldon House began as a half-house. A summer kitchen, probably early-to-mid-eighteenth century, is attached to the southern end of the main house.

The door opens into a small entry with a plain, narrow staircase leading up to the attic bedrooms. The prominent brick chimney contains four fireplaces instead of the typical three on the first floor. The chimney is supported by a large stone and brick barrel vault in the cellar.

To the south of the entry is the small south parlor, with a small, shallow fireplace with plain trim. In contrast, the large parlor in the northeast corner of the house has handsome beveled panelling on the entire chimney wall; a classic bolection molding surrounds the fireplace opening. At the north end is a small chamber, now a library; the room had been converted into one large space in the nineteenth century, but the wall has recently been rebuilt. To the west of the little library at the

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rear of the house was a small buttery, now a bathroom. West of the small parlor is the present kitchen, the former "keeping room," with a broad corner fireplace and simple mantel with two cupboard doors above it. This room has wainscoting and heavy cased corner posts.

To the north of the present kitchen is the dining room. It has handsome raised, beveled paneling covering the chimney breast and a chair rail. The windows in this room have matching panelled interior shutters. The dining room has an unusual closet, perhaps at one time used for wine, faced in stone and closed off by a four-panel door. The large former summer kitchen, now an ell on the south side of the house, has its own end chimney. This room has plain board wainscoting, wide floorboards, and a very simple, wide and tall flat-board mantel topped by a narrow shelf.

The upstairs garret has four rooms. The only room with a fireplace is on the south side; it also has plain board wainscoting. There is a hallway on the north side at the stairs, which gives access to a bathroom across the west and two smaller bedrooms to the north.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

c. 1728

Significant Dates

1728

1764

1764

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Sheldon House is a good intact example of a classic early Rhode Island farmhouse type--the broad one-and-a-half story gambrel from the eighteenth century. Its rural environment and siting--well back from Scituate Avenue, a major east-west road out of Providence in the eighteenth century--still evokes the agricultural experience that characterized the first two centuries of Rhode Island's history and remains a key part of the character of western Cranston to the present.

The Sheldons were large landholders, owning close to 3,000 acres in north central Cranston. By the 1830's there were five family houses on the Sheldon farm, as well as two workshops, a corn crib, chain house and smoke house, all the typical accoutrements of farming in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The Sheldon wealth is reflected in the construction and detailing of the house. Very likely built as a half-house, the building was probably enlarged in 1764, when Nicholas Sheldon III inherited the property. The more elaborate detailing of the northern half of the house reflects both later architectural style and the increased prosperity of the family. Despite being the earliest of the four remaining gambrel-roofed houses left standing along Scituate Road, its size and detailing--with raised paneling and wainscoting--is much more substantial than the others'.

The house stayed within the family until the mid-nineteenth century. As land was sold off, including the lot west of the house with the family burial ground, deeds show that access was to be granted to all descendants of Nicholas Sheldon to "reach and enter" the burial ground; however, that right includes the obligation to "close all gates and bars behind them".

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

"Cranston, Rhode Island, Statewide Historical Preservation Report, P-C-1," Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Providence, 1980.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Rhode Island Historical
Preservation Commission

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property less than one

UTM References

A 19 292860 4628120
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Sheldon House property is the lot line of lot 2120, as shown on Cranston Assessor's Plat 20/2.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the Sheldon House and its immediate setting.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Vivian Lasky
 organization Consultant date _____
 street & number 18 Savoy Street telephone 401-272-6692
 city or town Providence state Rhode Island zip code 02906

11/22/88

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The property is also associated with another well-known Rhode Island family. The Gladdings who owned Gladding's Department store in downtown Providence acquired the house in 1891.

Period of Significance: The Sheldon House is nominated for its architectural significance, that is, for its ability to document the forms and details used in the domestic buildings of Rhode Island's eighteenth-century substantial farmers. The period of significance therefore corresponds to the house's dates of construction. Internal evidence and local tradition both suggest that the original section of the house was built c. 1728; internal evidence and family history suggest that the significant addition occurred in 1764. Hence, the periods of significance are defined as c. 1728 and 1764.