

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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Item number 7

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NAME: Rathbun House

LOCATION: 343 Beacon Drive (formerly 287 Hatchery Road)

OWNER: Craig Willey & Celia Crawford Whilley, 343 Beacon Drive, N. Kingstown

CONDITION: Good; Altered; Original Site

02852

DESCRIPTION:

The Rathbun House is a one-and-a-half-story, five-bay, center-chimney house, dating from the mid-eighteenth century, and set amid late twentieth-century residences.

The house is set under a steep gable roof and is covered by unpainted shingles. The corners are marked by flat boards and the cornice by a heavy molding. The simple, south-facing entry is slightly off center and is surrounded with a simple, flat frame; the door itself is modern. The windows, whose frames were apparently replaced in the early twentieth century, have two-over-one sash. The foundation was recently rebuilt with concrete block. The chimney, recently rebuilt so as to preserve its original appearance, is of brick.

The interior arrangement of the house follows the standard five-room plan. An enclosed stair turns tightly against the chimney; it faces the door across a small entrance hall. Both front rooms have full-height fireplace breasts, the panels of which are raised in the southwest room, recessed in the southeast. The wide kitchen fireplace in the rear center room has a simple surround which continues to the ceiling around a recessed, plastered niche. All fireplaces are of brick; the kitchen fireplace contains an oven. Four-panel doors with original latches and H-hinges separate the rooms. Corner posts are cased; walls and ceilings are plastered, except for an early twentieth-century wainscot in the rear center room.

Alterations are more extensive in the two attic rooms; modern paneling covers the walls and a fireplace in the west room, but wide plank flooring remains.

Two outbuildings are located on the property: a small gable-roofed shed to the west and a rubblestone barn (or ice-house?) built partially below grade just north of the house.

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PERIOD: 1700-1799

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

SPECIFIC DATE: Unknown; probably mid-eighteenth century

BUILDER/ARCHITECT: Unknown

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Rathbun house, a simple one-and-a-half-story, five-bay, center-chimney house, is one of the few intact farmhouses remaining in North Kingstown from the mid-eighteenth century, a well-preserved example of a house type that once dotted the town's rural landscape during an important early phase of its development.

The house may be the second oldest of the four Rathbun houses once situated on that family's large landholdings in this area. Several Rathbuns from New Shoreham, perhaps cousins, began buying land in the area shortly thereafter and through land purchases and marriage became tightly interwoven with the small number of families who controlled the west-central edge of North Kingstown through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

ACREAGE: less than 1 acre

QUAD NAME: Slocum, R.I.

UTM: A 19 291100 4605120

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The Rathbun House boundary is the lot line of lot 112, Assessor's Plat 103, and includes the house itself, two small outbuildings, and the immediate surroundings.

LEVEL: Local

Photo numbers 26-28