# United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number	Page		
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#### SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 89001220	Date Listed: Ø	8/30/89
TaylorChaseSmythe House Property Name	Newport County	$\frac{RI}{State}$
N/A Multiple Name		
This property is listed in the Nation	onal Register of W	i atomi a

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Signature of the Keeper

8/30/87
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 3: Classification

Number of Resources within the Property: The house is classified as 1 contributing building, the outbuildings are classified as 2 noncontributing buildings.

Section 8: Period of Significance

The termination date for the period of significance is c.1919 to correspond with the probable date of the last significant alterations to the property which illustrate its significance-its evolution over time.

This information was confirmed with Bernard Murphy, Department of the Navy, by telephone.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

\* NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
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CONDITION

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**CHECK ONE** 

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\_\_FAIR

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\_\_UNEXPOSED

\_\_UNALTERED

X\_ORIGINAL SITE

**X**ALTERED

\_\_MOVED DATE\_\_\_\_

#### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Taylor-Chase-Smythe House is a wood frame, two-story, clapboarded, gable-roofed structure that rests on a random stone foundation. The first floor, a variation of a double pile center stair hall plan, is five bays across the south (front) elevation and contains a two-room kitchen ell on the west side of the north elevation; in addition, it features a glass-enclosed porch that wraps around the west and south elevations and becomes a porte-cochere in the southeast corner. The second floor, originally five bays across the south (front) elevation as well, contains a full width, single bay addition to the west elevation that has increased the size of both rooms on the west side of the center stair hall. The ell on the west side of the north elevation is aligned with this addition, and is one room in depth.

When the house was constructed in the mid- to late eighteenth century, a large, stone fireplace and chimney were positioned in the center of the building, and each major room in the house undoubtedly drew heat from them. At present, the fireplace and chimney no longer exist; however, a distinctive five foot notch cut in the rough hewn ridge beam at the peak of the gable in the center of the attic suggests a type of stone construction similar to the foundation. The roof was constructed with large (roughly 5 x 7) hewn wood principal rafters, spaced 2-1/2' on center, that were birdsmouthed at the eave plates, and mortised at the ridge; wood collars were dovetailed into the principal rafters and the pieces of the entire system were marked with chiseled Roman numerals, thus indicating a heavy timber type of post-and-beam construction. The ridge beam was a single piece of hewn 6 x 8 timber that spanned the entire five bay length of the structure; since there were no splices, this suggests two ideas: that the center stone fireplace was original to the building, and that the house was always five bays in width. Aside from the center chimney, the entire roof frame is intact.

Not including the center stair hall (see below) most of the mouldings in the rooms of the original part of the second floor have not been altered. Casings around doors and windows, and baseboards have wide boards and a decorative ogee or routed edge, and are heavily built up with numerous layers of paint. The plaster walls have a coarse but even finish and beaded, layered wood chair rails are set three feet off the floor. No original doors or hardware survive.

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The house apparently underwent its first major modification in ca. 1850 when the large, stone central fireplace was removed and the house was "modernized" with the addition of a center stair hall. Presently, the first floor is completely framed with 3  $\times$  8, straight sawn wood joists, a curious contrast to the heavy timber roof construction. Perhaps the first floor beams originally framed into the fireplace structure, which is not unusual, and when the house was "modernized," a new framing system that was contemporary was installed. This idea is reinforced by the complete lack of any eighteenth-century mouldings on any of the first floor doors, windows, or baseboards. Presently the entire first floor is embellished with wide, garish mouldings typical of the mid-nineteenth century. The center stair hall that was added in ca. 1850 contains a wood floor composed of light and dark stained oak boards laid in an alternating pattern. The stairway contains a visually heavy, stained railing, balusters, and builtup newel that is skewed to the angle of the steps; twelve risers on the fully carpeted stairway lead to the landing and a single tread rise to the east, rear bedroom on the right, or the second floor center stair hall on the left.

When the house was modified in ca. 1850, the fireplaces for the first floor were moved to the centers of the walls between the east pair and the west pair of rooms. The sole survivor of this change is the fireplace in the library, a carved, stained wood unit with a geometrically bracketed mantel shelf and three-color, floral motif Minton-Hollins encaustic tiles on the surround; the chamber is made of cast iron (or rolled steel) and the hearth is glazed tile. At present no fireplaces exist in the same location on the east side of the center stair hall; however, their one-time presence is confirmed by a patch in the roof sheathing, a bleaching of the wood ridge beam that suggests a former long-time roof leak (that is similar to the bleaching of the woodwork at the existing chimney), and a patch in the concrete floor in the basement.

The final modifications to the house in ca. 1850 were the twostory ell that was attached to the west side of the north elevation, and the single bay extension and glazed porch on the west elevation of the original building. These accretions were designed to be imitative of the original architectural features; windows were the same size and type, cornices were duplicated, and roof slopes were copied. Access to each of the new first floor spaces was through former windows converted to doors, and

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the new two-story ell contained a winder stair that linked the second floor to the first floor and attic.

In this capacity, the house remained throughout the rest of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, until ca. 1919, when it was again modified to include a one-story utility room addition to the two-story ell; it was also at this time that the east side central fireplaces were removed and the two rooms converted to a single, large space with one fireplace on the east exterior wall. The mantel, which was recycled from one of the fireplaces that was removed, is wood and contains Doric order pilasters and triglyphs beneath a frieze that forms a shallow mantel shelf. It appears to be Colonial Revival (rather than Colonial) because it lacks the built-up of paint layers usually seen in 250 year old elements.

The large, one-story porch that spans the entire south (front) elevation, links into the west enclosed porch and forms a porte-cochere in the southeast corner. It is supported with wood, Doric columns set directly on the porch floor and was probably constructed ca. 1919. Infill casement windows were added in the late 1970s, thus creating an additional living space.

The site is bounded by a low, dry-laid, field stone wall that is similar in appearance, construction, and type of stone to the chimney on the east exterior wall. In the northwest corner of the site are situated two small, wood frame, clapboard garage structures; the first is a two bay, one and one-half story gable roof structure, and the second is a single bay, one-story gable roof structure.

		INVENTION		mily/rural
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PERIOD	AF	REAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CH	IECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW	

SPECIFIC DATES 3rd quarter 18th century JILDER/ARCHITECT -early 20th century

Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Taylor-Chase-Smythe House is significant under Criterion A, association with "broad patterns of our history." As it presently exists, the house and its yard, which are enclosed by a low stone wall, reflect a series of nineteenth-century adaptations of what had been an eighteenth-century New England house. This series of changes is associated primarily with the history of the Chase family and its increased prosperity, expressed through additions to the residence and institution of a more formal interior plan, elaborate stairwell, and stylish decorative elements (fireplace, first floor mouldings). The history of the Chase family, as expressed through enlargements of and modifications to the dwelling, illustrates the integral relationship between rural history and family history in the nineteenth century.

Based on architectural evidence, the original structure dated to the mid- to late eighteenth century, although it was extensively modified during the nineteenth century (see discussion in #7). Prior research suggested that the original structure may have been built by 1702 when the land is believed to have been owned by Robert Taylor, Jr., a prosperous merchant in Newport. The proprietors records for the town of Middletown noted in 1702 the presence of Taylor's farm, the highway, the driftway and a house on the property; this is held to be the earliest mention of Chase's Lane and the beginning of West Main Road. Surviving British maps from the War for Independence, showed a structure at approximately this location, occupied by a Chase, presumably Peter Chase, by 1778 (Lattu 1954). Chase purchased a circa-sixtyacre property from the Taylor heirs in 1780 (Land Evidence Vol. 2, p. 324). Additional confirmation of Peter Chase's presence in Middletown prior to his purchase of land in 1780 is found in the 1774 census of the occupants of the colony of Rhode Island and Providence, which lists both James and Peter Chases' households (Bartlett, comp. 1969:175, 177).

#### **9** MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

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Historic Preservation Officer has been alle	lowed 90 days in w	hich to present the	nomination to the State Review Board and to
evaluate its significance. The evaluated lev	vel of significance in	sNational X	_StateLocal.
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Genealogical data compiled by members of the Chase family (Boyes n.d.) indicate that Peter Chase (1743-1782) was James Chase's uncle, James (1761-1848) having been the son of Peter's brother Zacchaeus (b.1737). Lattu (1954) states that Peter Chase left the property to his son James, who was 12 when Peter died in 1782. The mid-nineteenth-century owner of the property, Robert S. Chase (1796-1873), was, however, the descendant of Peter Chase's nephew James (1760-1848) and not his son (Boyes n.d.). Robert Chase (1796-1848) can be reliably associated with the house based on information contained in maps, deeds, and wills (Beers 1870; Sanborn Map Company 1921; Probate Records Vol. 6, pp. 306-308, Land Evidence Vol. 8. p. 338). It is also known that one of the James Chases began to purchase farms along West Main Road (known as the "highway") in the 1790s (Land Evidence Vol. 3, pp. 338, 446, 447; Vol. 4, pp. 84, 109, 149, 151, 152, 154, 160; Vol. 5. pp. 144, 268). While it is unlikely that James Chase (son of Peter) would have had the financial resources to undertake these purchases at this time, when he would have been in his mid-20s, it is entirely plausible that James Chase (nephew of Peter) would have been in a position to do when he was in his late 30s and would have begun to acquire land on which to settle his sons, who, in fact, disposed of some of this property after James died in 1848 (see Henretta 1978 for a discussion of modifications in land transfers under the New England system of partible inheritance). Some confusion, therefore, presently exists as to the eighteenth-century antecedents of the farm although a construction date of the third quarter of the eighteenth century is presently assigned since both James (son of Zacchaeus) and Peter Chase were clearly in Middletown by 1774.

James Chase (son of Zacchaeus) died in 1848 and his son Robert S. Chase bought the farm on which his father had lived in September of that year (Land Evidence, Vol. 8, p. 434). It then comprised 160 acres. Robert Chase increased the farm to 250 acres and eventually left the house in which he lived to his elder son William although he split the farm between his two sons, Robert S. Chase Jr., and William B. Chase. The 1850 Federal census of population indicated that Robert S. and his son William B. Chase occupied separate dwellings, although only William Chase was listed in the agriculture schedule, implying that he was, at least, managing the farm. William's household, moreover, was much larger and included his brother and his family as well as three laborers and

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a family of boarders. The 1855 state valuation for the town of Middletown listed Robert Chase [Sr.] as the owner of the real estate with his sons each reporting personal property valued at \$1200 (Rhode Island 1855). By 1860, however, Robert S. Chase Jr. and William B. Chase had moved into separate dwellings (U.S., Bureau of Census 1860a:172). The 1865 state census of Middletown showed Robert S. Chase [Sr.] and his wife as members of Williams's household (Rhode Island 1865:n.p.). Subsequent tax assessments (1866-1870) listed William and Robert Jr. as their father's tenants. The 1870 Federal population schedule enumerated William and his family as members of his father's household although William and Robert Jr. appeared in the agriculture schedule (U.S., Bureau of Census 1870a:1;1870b:5-6).

The issue is, of course, which of the Chase households should be associated with the surviving farmhouse. The Beers atlas (1870) identified "R[obert] Chase" with three structures, one of which corresponds to the surviving dwelling. However, a 1907 atlas (Lawton and Cotton 1907) clearly linked William Chase with this location and excluded from the bounds of William's farm the other two dwellings depicted on the earlier map. The surviving farmhouse is properly identified with William Chase and his household, which since at least 1850 had been augmented either by the presence of a sibling and his family or by his father and mother.

Real property transfers have been interpreted by Greven among other scholars as reflective of family relationships. Swierenga (1983) has suggested that Greven's interpretation, based on Colonial Andover, Massachusetts, is applicable to broader issues in American rural history. Indeed, Ostergren (1981) found evidence of partible inheritance practices and inter vivos transfers of real estate in late nineteenth-century Minnesota that are quite similar to practices found in older areas in the east. With reference to eighteenth-century architecture, Brown (1986) has remarked, in passing, that augmentations to the dwelling may reflect passage of the property from one generation to the next. While there is admittedly some ambiguity as to the precise dating of construction episodes in the surviving farmhouse, the physical evidence, when compared with the family's history suggests a similar interpretation of the evolution of the dwelling, which mirrored the life cycle of the household and the progression from one generation to the next.

Form No. 10-300a (Rev. 10-74)

## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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The architectural evidence points to one and perhaps two construction episodes in the mid-nineteenth century. The first occurred when the original center chimney was removed and replaced with a hall with two chimneys in the center of the rooms to either side of it. Miscellaneous receipts dating to 1850 and 1851 in possession of descendants of the Chase family document purchase of building materials by a Robert Chase; among these were bills for "flooring" and construction of a chimney. Another receipt, dated January 1852 and signed by William B. Chase, acknowledged payment in full from Robert S. Chase for "all Bills of House." Both Robert Jr. and William married between 1840 and 1850, when they co-occupied the dwelling which eventually descended to William's exclusive ownership. The first set of alterations, therefore, were presumably undertaken to renovate the property, which had been occupied by James Chase until 1848, and to divide the dwelling between the two young families. After Robert Jr. took up residence on the farm which he eventually inherited, his place in William's household was then occupied by his father and his mother. The first two-story extension, which would have housed a larger kitchen area as well as chambers on the second floor, again, suggests accommodating a larger household.

The tile surrounds on the mantel in the library and first floor mouldings may date either to the construction episode that resulted in removal of the center chimney or may have been added later. Certainly, the mid-nineteenth century saw a period of prosperity in the history of the family. In 1849, William Chase's personal property was valued at \$300 and by 1855, it had increased four-fold to \$1200 (Valuation of Middletown, May 7, 1849, Rhode Island 1855). In 1861, William B. Chase served as Middletown's deputy to the General Assembly (Arnold 1876:v). The addition of the front and side porches contributed to a more gracious approach to the dwelling.

After the death of Robert Sr., however, the value of both Robert's and William's taxable personal property declined and in 1879, William mortgaged the farm (Land Evidence, Vol. 13, p. 424; Vol. 13, p. 500). This action may have been taken in order to raise capital following sale of some of the assets to his sister, according to his father's will, or in order to buy a farm on which to settle his son. Sarah Chase lived in William's household in 1875 (Rhode Island 1875:16), and Jedrey (1979), admittedly

Form No. 10-300a (Ray. 10-74)

## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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discussing inheritance practices in eighteenth-century New England, has observed that inheritance of the paternal homestead could be an expensive proposition for the male heir since it brought encumbrances and obligations to other surviving heirs. Since his father's death preceded the need to find a farmstead for his son (cf. Ostergren 1981, Easterlin et al. 1978), William may have found his circumstances somewhat constrained as the 1870s drew to a close.

William B. Chase left the home farm with its "large dwelling house" to his son Peleg in 1885; it was then encumbered by a mortgage (Will of William B. Chase, Probate Records Vol. 10, pp. 361-364). The three surviving children, Cynthia, Peleg and William re-mortgaged the property in December of that year (Land Evidence, Vol. 15, p. 37). The mortgage was renewed three times before the farm was leased to Clifford S. Kempton of New York City in 1891 (Land Evidence, Vol. 16, p. 156). It was eventually sold to Frederick W. Smythe in 1913 (Land Evidence, Vol. 21, p. 720).

Although the farm had been leased for several years and may have deteriorated during this period, the value of buildings and improvements did not escalate after Smythe acquired the property in 1913. From 1913 through 1917/1918, the value of the land remained at \$12,000 and the value of the improvements at \$2000 (Municipal Year Book of the Town of Middletown, Rhode Island 1913 - 1917). In 1918-1919, however, the value of the land increased by \$1500, from \$12,000 to \$13,500 (or 12.5%) while the value of the improvements increased by 50% from \$2000 to \$3000 (Municipal Year Book of the Town of Middletown, Rhode Island 1918:121). This may reflect the extension of the kitchen as well as interior renovations and may also have encompassed expansion to the associated farm complex, but as observed elsewhere (see #7), these modifications do not fundamentally alter the nineteenthcentury character of the dwelling. In 1941, the house and its outbuildings were acquired by the Navy as part of an expansion program, which included purchase of all the land adjacent to the shore between the Naval Station in Newport and the Melville Fuel Depot. It has been used as a military residence since that time, and subsequent maintenance has not compromised the dwelling's historic merit.

Form No. 10-300a (Rev. 10-74)

### UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Swierenga (1981:212) has defined the new rural history as the "systematic study of human behavior over time in the rural environment." The "rural environment" was characterized by low population density, prevalence of farming, physical if not social isolation, large family networks, family work patterns, and seasonal labor requirements. The structure of the family and perception of the importance of the family are integral to understanding various decisions that nineteenth-century farmers made (Swierenga 1983; Easterlin et al. 1981; Ryan 1981; Ostergren 1981; Henretta 1978). To the extent that the sequence of alterations to the dwelling reflects changes in the composition of the nineteenth-century household and its economic fortunes, it becomes a lens through which the history of the nineteenth-century rural family may be viewed.

Form No. 10-200a (Rev. 10-74)

### UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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CONTINUATION SHEET 8

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 1

Arnold, Samuel Greene

An Historical Sketch of Middletown, Rhode Island from its Organization, in 1743 to the Centennial Year, 1876. John P. Sanborn and Company, Newport.

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Atlas of the State of Rhode Island and Providence
Plantations. D.G. Beers, J.H. Goodhue, and H.G. Parsell,
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Boyes, Carol A.

n.d. Typescripts of genealogical information compiled by family members and copies of original, mid-nineteenth century receipts in possession of family members.

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Easterlin, Richard A., George Alter, and Gretchen A. Condran
1978 Farms and Farm Families in Old and New Areas: The Northern
States in 1860. In <u>Family and Population in Nineteenth-</u>
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## UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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PAGE 2

Lattu, A. M. R.

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Assessments, valuations, May 7, 1849
Probate Records
Tax books and valuations of property, 1866-1890
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- The New Rural History: Defining the Parameters. <u>Great Plains Quarterly</u> 1:211-223.
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Form No. 10-390a (Rev. 10-74)

### UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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CONTINUATION SHEET 10

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- U.S. Bureau of Census
- 1850a Seventh Census of the United States Agriculture Schedule, Rhode Island, Newport County, Middletown.

  Manuscript on file at Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
- 1850b Seventh Census of the United States Population Schedule, Rhode Island, Newport County, Middletown. Manuscript on file at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
- 1860a Eighth Census of the United States Agriculture Schedule, Rhode Island, Newport County, Middletown. Microfilm on file at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
- 1860b Eighth Census of the United States Population Schedule, Rhode Island, Newport County, Middletown. Microfilm on file at the Rhode Island Historical Society, Providence.
- 1870a Ninth Census of the United States Agriculture Schedule, Rhode Island, Newport County, Middletown. Microfilm on file at the Rhode Island State Archives, Providence.
- 1870b Ninth Census of the United States Population Schedule, Rhode Island, Newport County, Middletown. Microfilm on file at the Rhode Island State Archives, Providence.

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#### UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

#### NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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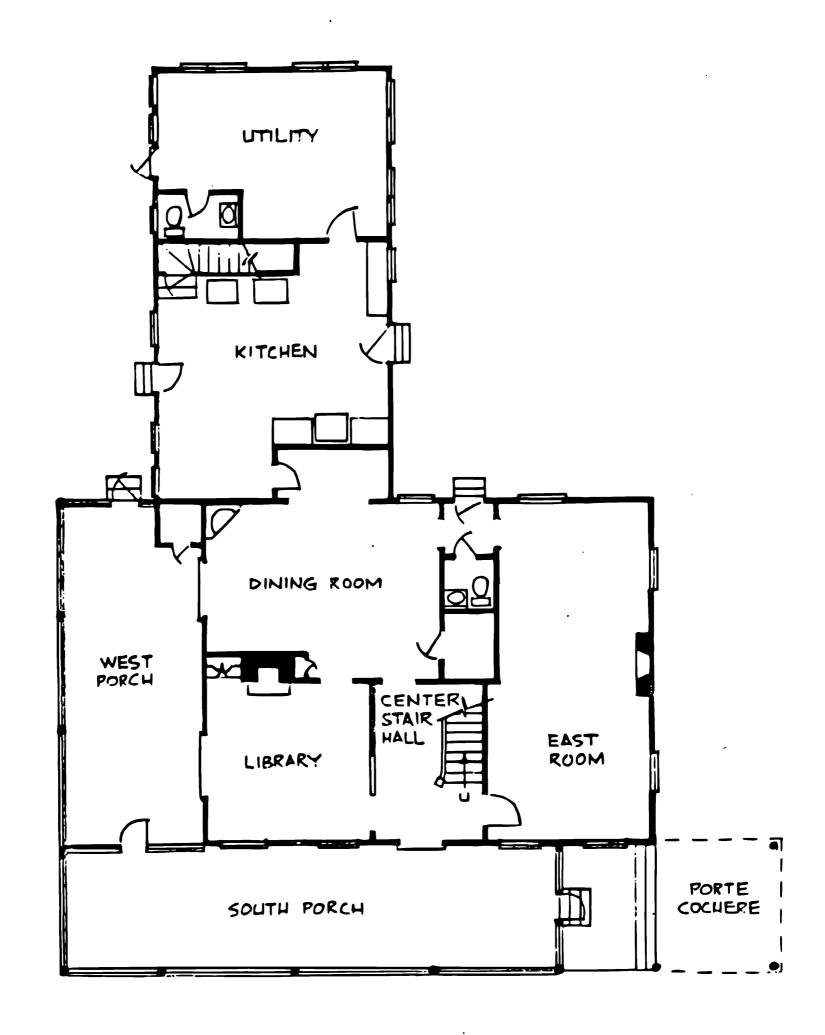
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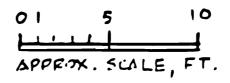
PAGE 1

The property consists of the area bounded by low stone walls. Contained in this lot, which reflects the historic house lot as distinguished from the farmlands and described in William Chase's will in 1884 (Will of William B. Chase, Probate Records Vol. 16, pp. 361-364), are the dwelling and two dependencies. To the south and east of the property is a large military housing complex; to the north and west are tennis courts, administrative and service structures. Northeast of the property are Gates 16A and 16B, which enter onto Chases Lane.

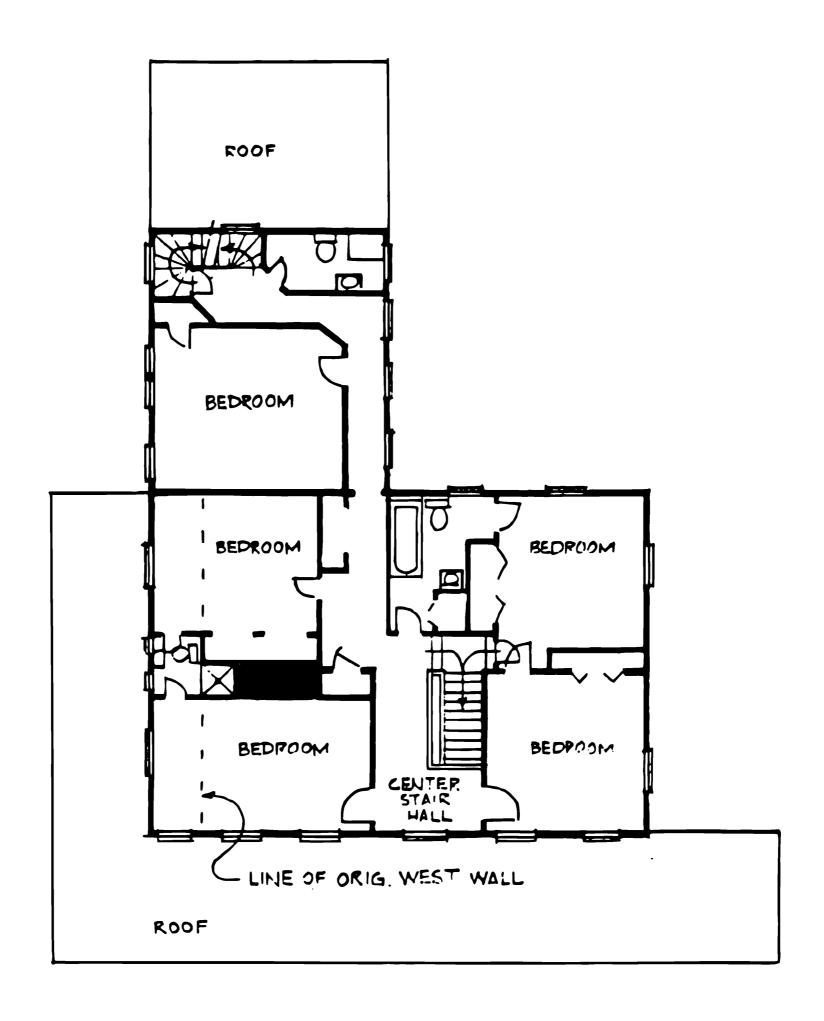


• FIRST · FLOOR · PLAN ·

TAYLOR - CHASE - SMYTHE HOUSE







# EXISTING CONDITION SECOND · FLOOR · PLAN · TAYLOR · CHASE · SMYTHE HOUSE OI S 10 APPROX · SCALE · FT.