

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAY 1976
DATE ENTERED	OCT 1976

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME *

HISTORIC (Jeremiah) Dexter House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 957 North Main Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN Providence

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF Rep. Fernand S. St. Germain 1

STATE Rhode Island

CODE 44

COUNTY Providence CODE 007

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME John B. Nevin Estate

STREET & NUMBER Mr. John Gorham, Attorney 58 Weybosset Street

CITY, TOWN Providence

VICINITY OF

STATE Rhode Island

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Providence City Hall

STREET & NUMBER Dorrance and Washington Streets

CITY, TOWN Providence

STATE Rhode Island

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE HABS

DATE 1937, 1955

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN Washington

STATE D. C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Jeremiah Dexter House at 957 North Main Street is a rectangular, one-and-a-half story gambrel-roof structure built on a typical eighteenth century central chimney, five-room plan. It was measured and photographed for the Historic American Buildings Survey circa 1940.

Built in 1754 by Jeremiah Dexter, and one of the few remaining houses once typical of Providence farm building, the structure is of timber frame construction, set on a rough stone foundation, and was originally entirely clapboarded, although the ends are now shingled. The remaining clapboards are shiplapped and graduated in width, the wider boards toward the top. On the front a molded eaves cornice breaks forward to form the window and door caps; drawings show that originally at least some end windows also had molded caps.

The six-panel front door, which retains its original wrought-iron strap hinges and latch, is set in a plain enframing and has a five-paned transom above. There are two windows at the left of the doorway, and one on the right. The narrow window frames are original. All originally had nine-over-nine sash, but the lower sashes now have single panes. The corners of the house are finished with beaded corner boards. The large central chimney is square in shape, and the top is articulated. A low cellar extends under all of the original structure. About 1850 a two-room one-story gable-roofed ell was added in the rear, the central room on the rear was expanded slightly with a bay, and a lean-to was added to the kitchen on the south. The roof of the house and ell is now covered with modern asphalt tiles.

Originally there were barns and other yard buildings, including a well and corncrib set in a spacious farm yard. Many of these buildings and the grounds survived the onslaught of city development until the end of the nineteenth century, with the corncrib extant into the 1940's. The HABS measured drawing of the corncrib shows that it had vertical plank walls, slanting outward, and a gable roof, and was set on large stones placed at the corners. Only the well remains today, set behind or east of the house within a small wooden gable-roofed enclosure. The remaining grounds, now reduced to approximately 5,000 square feet, are paved over for a parking lot and bounded by a picket fence. The area is zoned commercial, and the house faces west onto North Main Street, a heavily travelled thoroughfare.

The interior has retained most of its original features and paneling, although some of these have been covered over with modern wall sheathing which can be removed. Drawings show that the windows throughout the house originally were finished with molded sills and broad architraves finely molded on both edges. Unfortunately, this window framing has been removed.

(see Continuation Sheet 1)

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CONTINUATION SHEET 1

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The original part of the house is divided on the first floor into five rooms with a tiny entry vestibule in front of the central chimney, which serves fireplaces on three sides. The kitchen, or keeping room, located on the southwest side of the house, contains a large splayed fireplace fitted with a crane, with a bake-oven set at the side front. The walls of this room have what is probably the original random-width vertical pine sheathing; the door on the south wall is sheathed on the inside with wide horizontal planks and retains its original wrought-iron strap hinges and latch. As in the rest of the first floor, the ceiling is plastered and the corner-posts are cased.

The northwest room was a parlor and is notable for its fireplace, which has a brick hearth, an iron lintel, and a bolection molding of early unsymmetrical profile around the opening, and an overmantel composed of three vertical panels. The middle room on the east side or rear of the house is flanked by a small bedroom on the north and a pantry on the south. It also had a tiled hearth and fireplace with splayed side-walls; the paneling is now concealed behind plywood.

A very narrow front stair leads to the second floor, which was originally divided into four rooms with plain sheathed walls, and exposed beams. The northern room here contains a brick fireplace that is slightly splayed.

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CONTINUATION SHEET 2 ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

The Dexter property was ideal for the camp. It was situated on high and well-aired ground and was located close enough to Providence and Pawtucket for the convenience of the commissaries, yet remote enough to create a buffer zone between the troops and the citizens of Providence. Reverend Edwin M. Stone in Our French Allies (1884) described the campground:

The spot selected for the camp was a plateau on the summit of the ridge lying east of "Pawtucket Avenue" (now North Main Street). ...Each side was lined with tents. On the eastern side ...were several ranges of huts... (each) fifteen feet long and twelve feet wide. A large headquarters tent, surmounted by an ornamental urn, was pitched near the western side.

Although it is not so recorded, it is likely the French were offered the hospitality of Dexter's house. They stayed for three weeks, building barracks, parading and resting until word arrived from Boston that the French fleet was prepared to embark the Army. To cover the cost of the wood cut and damage done, Jeremiah Dexter was paid \$1,446 in Continental currency, which soon became worthless. On December 4, 1782, the Army decamped, leaving the Dexter farm and Providence.

The French campsite remained a well known site, and in 1865 a survey was made of the camp by Reverend Stone, assisted by Henry Davis. They were able to trace out and clearly define the sites of 313 huts, tents, and fire pits, and a map of their findings was published in Our French Allies. Later in the nineteenth century an effort was made to preserve the site since many of the physical remains of the camp were still visible. Unfortunately, all that came of this was the erection of a commemorative plaque in 1911 on a small lot at the corner of Summit Avenue and Brewster Street several blocks from the Dexter house. Today, the Jeremiah Dexter farmhouse remains the only significant marker of the French campsite.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1754

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Jeremiah Dexter house is architecturally significant as an example of early Providence farmhouses; it is historically significant as the only survival of an early Providence farm settlement and because in 1782 the French Army under the command of Vicomte de Rochambeau chose the property as the site of their encampment while in the vicinity of Providence. It is now the most notable physical feature remaining in the City that can be linked to the French presence in Providence during the Revolution. Fortunately, the house is almost unaltered, and is thus a rare surviving example of a once common Providence building type.

During the first half of the eighteenth century several members of the Dexter family lived on neighboring farms all of which were part of the estate owned by Jeremiah Dexter's great-grandfather, the Reverend Gregory Dexter, an associate of Roger Williams. The Jeremiah Dexter house was built in 1754 slightly over a mile north of Providence at the foot of Herrendon Lane (today called Rochambeau Avenue) on the Pawtucket Turnpike (North Main Street) which was part of the original Boston to New York highway. A granite milepost which shows the distance to the Providence Court House as "1½M." still stands on the Dexter lot. Jeremiah Dexter was a farmer and according to tradition a "natural bone setter" who lived on this farm with his family of nine children until his death in 1807. His grandfather, John, lived on a farm just to the north, and his father, Stephen, lived still further north along the turnpike. Only the Jeremiah Dexter house, which has been continuously owned by descendants of Jeremiah Dexter, remains of this original Dexter family settlement. It is still (in 1976) in Dexter family ownership.

The arrival of the French Army in Newport in mid-July of 1780, too late in the season to be of any offensive help to the American Army, necessitated their quartering in Rhode Island during the winter of 1780-1781. The Army left Rhode Island the following June to join General Washington's forces near Yorktown, Virginia, camping enroute on a plain in the southwestern section of Providence. In November of 1782, on the triumphant return march of the French Army from the decisive victory at Yorktown, this campground was again occupied. However, the owner of the site refused to permit the French to cut wood for fuel and barracks, and the following day Rochambeau marched his troops to a new encampment on the Dexter farm.

(See continuation sheet 2)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Blanchard, Claude. The Journal of Claude Blanchard, 1780-1783. trans. William Duane and ed. Thomas Balch. Albany, New York: 1876.

Cady, John Hutchins. The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950. Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957.

(See continuation sheet 3)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,9	3 20 3 0,0 4 0 2	3 50 4,6 35 2,9,8	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Mrs. George E. Downing, Chairman
Edward F. Sanderson, Survey Specialist

ORGANIZATION R. I. Historical Preservation Commission DATE April 14, 1976

STREET & NUMBER 150 Benefit Street TELEPHONE 401-277-2678

CITY OR TOWN Providence STATE Rhode Island

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Frederick W. Manser

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer DATE April 30, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Acting DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 10/6/96

ATTEST:

DATE 10/7/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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CONTINUATION SHEET 3 ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

Downing, Antoinette F. Early Homes of Rhode Island. Richmond, Virginia: Garrett & Massie, Inc., 1937.

Historic American Building Survey Inventory, R.I.-5; 9 sheets, 4 photographs; No. 157.

Historic American Building Survey Sheet, J. H. Cady; 9/23/55.

Newman, S. C. Dexter Family Genealogy. Providence, Rhode Island: A. Crawford Greene, 1859.

Preston, Howard W. Rochambeau and the French Troops in Providence in 1780-1781-1782. Providence, Rhode Island: 1924.

Rice, Howard C. and Anne S. K. Brown. The American Campaigns of Rochambeau's Army. 2 vols. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press and Providence, Rhode Island: Brown University Press, 1972.

Stone, Edwin M. Our French Allies. Providence, Rhode Island: Providence Press Company, 1884.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

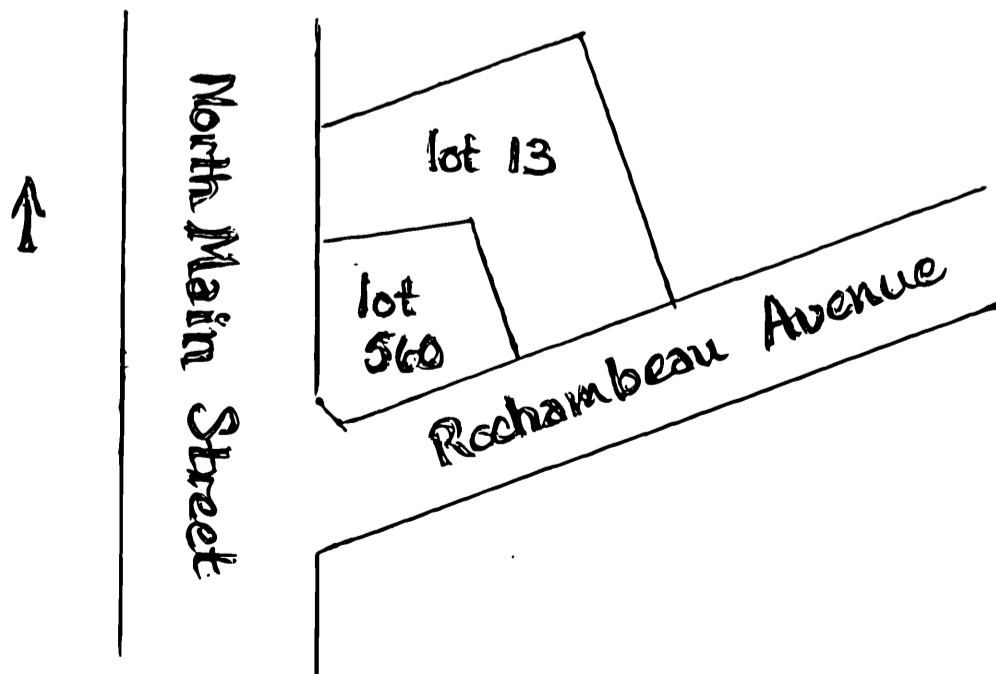
PAGE

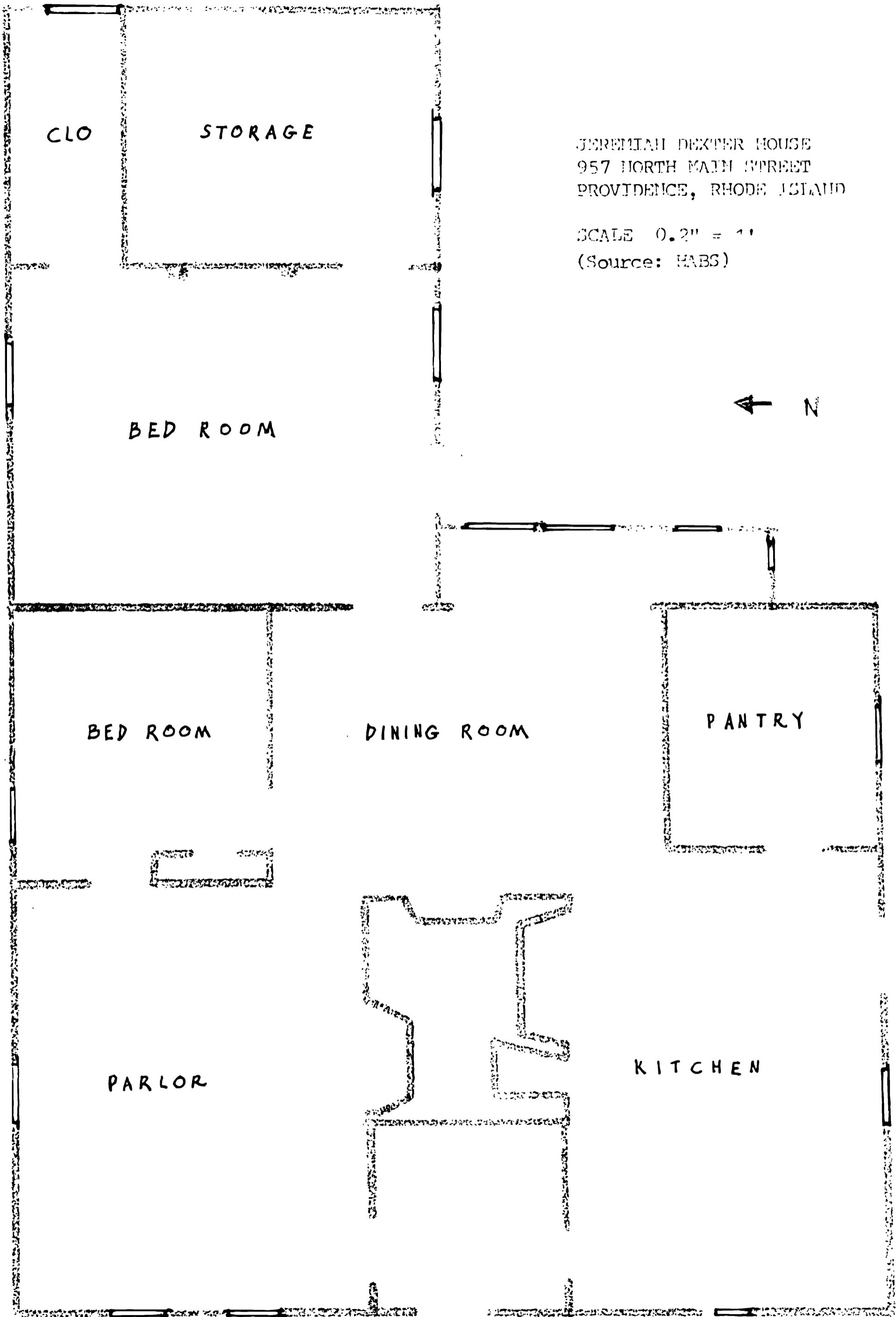
Jeremiah Dexter House Amendment

The property to be amended to the original nomination for the Jeremiah Dexter House (957 North Main Street, Providence) abuts the Dexter property (plat 73, lot 560) on the north and east, forming an irregular "L" shape around it (see site plan). The property to be amended (plat 73, lot 13) is part of the original farm acreage of the Dexter property and, presumably, would have been part of the dooryard. Although it is now asphalt-paved, surrounded by chain-link fence, and used for parking, it has significant historic association with the Dexter house and some potential for archeological interest, as no major grading appears to have been involved in its conversion to a parking lot. The entire Dexter farm was the site of the French Army encampment during the Revolutionary War. (See original nomination for specific information.)

Plat 73, lot 13 contains 14,456 square feet (plus or minus) and fronts 77.6 feet along Rochambeau Avenue and 58.81 feet along North Main Street. Lot 560, already nominated, contains 5,052 square feet. Combined acreage for the Dexter House lot plus proposed amendment is 19,508 square feet (plus or minus).

Lot 13 is presently owned by the estate of Benjamin J. Nevin (c/o Mr. Lovejoy, Industrial National Bank, 111 Westminster Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903). The Heritage Foundation of Rhode Island, the current owner of the Jeremiah Dexter House, has applied for a HCRS grant-in-aid to acquire lot 13. This acquisition should help immeasurably in restoring the immediate visual setting of the house to something more closely resembling its appearance in former days. At present, the Jeremiah Dexter House seems awash in a sea of asphalt. Any additional landscaped area around it will significantly enhance its sense of time and place.





JEREMIAH DEXTER HOUSE
957 NORTH MAIN STREET
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

SCALE 0.2" = 1'
(Source: HABS)



CLO

STORAGE

BED ROOM

BED ROOM

DINING ROOM

PANTRY

PARLOR

KITCHEN