

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	APR 24 1973

1. NAME

COMMON:
Brown Avenue Historic District

AND/OR HISTORIC:
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2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
Brown Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:
Johnston

STATE Rhode Island	CODE 44	COUNTY: Providence	CODE 007
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____ _____

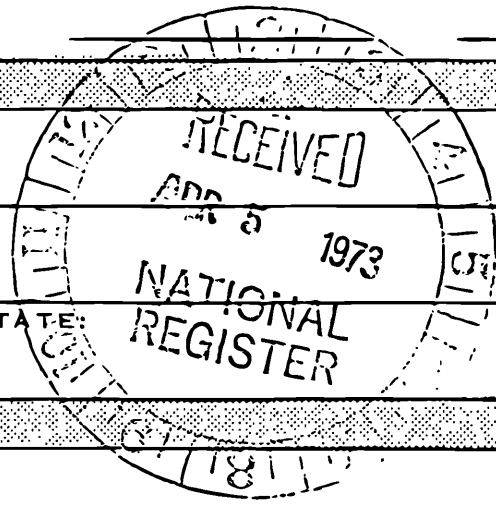
4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Multiple

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE: Rhode Island	CODE
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Town Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:
1385 Hartford Avenue

CITY OR TOWN:
Johnston

STATE Rhode Island	CODE 44
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
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DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:	CODE
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:	
COUNTY:	
ENTRY NUMBER	APR
DATE	

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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

Brown Avenue cuts through gently rolling countryside in the northwestern section of Johnston. It connects Hartford Avenue (Route 6) and Greenville Road (Route 5). The Pocasset River -- a small stream at this point -- transects the avenue. Despite its name, Brown Avenue Historic District encompasses a section of the road running from Boyd Hill to the Brown cranberry bog, a distance of one mile (see map).

The district comprises approximately 500 acres of farm land -- woodlots, orchards, pastureland and fields. Since the late eighteenth century this land has been divided into five farms. Today Dame farm is the functional and visual focal point of the district. Brown Avenue inscribes an irregular arc around the property, so that as one travels along the road the buildings, fields and activities of Dame Farm are presented in ever changing aspect. The barn, sheds and dwelling ("A" thru "D" on the site plan), set well back from the road, form a compact nucleus surrounded by fields where hay, corn and vegetables are grown. Two family cemeteries ("E" and "F") are located in a corn field beside the farm buildings. A dairy herd grazes in the hillside pastures, and beyond the pastureland and fields are woodlots and orchards.

Buildings on Dame Farm range in date from the late eighteenth through the early twentieth century. The farmhouse ("A"), though altered, follows a characteristic eighteenth century format. It is a two-and-a-half-story frame structure with clapboard siding, pitched roof and central chimney. (The present chimney is a stove vent. The original chimney stack was removed to make room for bathrooms on the first and second floors.) A one and a half story kitchen ell with "farmer's porch" extends from the east side of the house. The five bay main facade has a central entrance. The second floor of the interior retains its original five room plan. Interesting finish remains on the staircase and in the second floor southwest chamber.

Dame Farm's shingle clad gambrel roof barn ("B") was built in 1910 by the Dames with the aid of local carpenters. The building's heavy chestnut wood frame was fashioned from lumber cut on the farm. Extending from the west end of the barn is a cow shed and an ice house and storage shed. Beside the cow shed stand two silos ("C", erected 1925). Completing the Dame Farm complex are two small sheds east of the farmhouse ("D"). Their construction suggest that they date from the eighteenth century. One is a carriage and wood shed, the

(See Continuation Sheet)

*Brown Avenue is and has always been a rural farm road.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

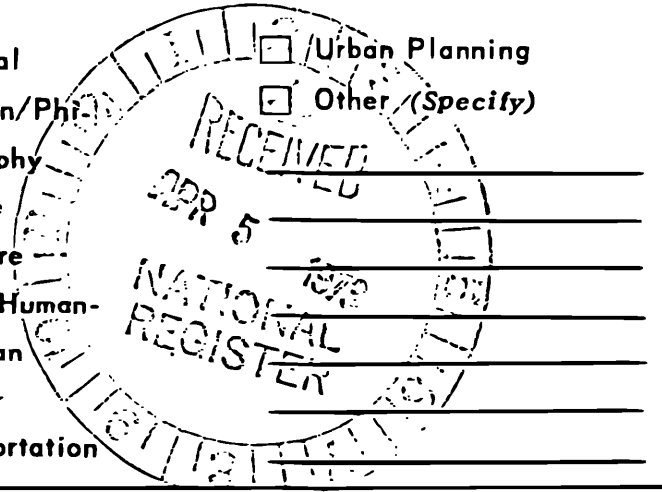
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <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 type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <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 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In 1850 the section of Brown Avenue within the proposed district contained five farms. On the west side of the avenue were the Brown, Winsor and Boyd farms, on the east side the Waterman and Dame farms (the latter known at the time as the Steere Farm). These farms date back to the eighteenth century and all were under cultivation well into the twentieth century. The history of the Dame Farm may be taken as representative of farms on Brown Avenue. In 1786 Emor Olney sold his "homestead farm" to Samuel Steere for \$600. Members of the Steere family farmed the property for over a century. In 1890 William R. Steere sold it to Don and James Dame. Four generations of the Dame family have operated the farm since then.

Dame Farm has supplied diversified crops to the local market for at least a century and a quarter. Census figures for 1850 reveal that the farm produced 120 bushels of Indian corn and 300 bushels of Irish potatoes; the milk of seven cows yielded 600 lbs. of butter and 100 lbs. of cheese; slaughtered meat products were valued at \$65; sale of vegetables from the market garden was worth \$50; 30 bushels of rye, 30 lbs. of wool and 50 tons of hay were also produced. Livestock, aside from the cows and "four other cattle", included two horses, a pair of oxen, sixteen sheep and three pigs. Production at Dame Farm remains geared to the local market. Milk, apples and vegetables are sold; corn and hay are grown for fodder. Now, as for two hundred years, firewood cut on the property is used to heat the farmhouse.

Dame Farm is a family farm. So were the other farms in the area. Each was farmed by its owner aided by his children, relatives, in-laws and a few hired hands. A study of the geneology of the families resident on and near Brown Avenue in the nineteenth century reveals considerable intermarriage: the Boyds were related to the Steeres, the Steeres to the Winsors and Watermans, the Watermans to the

(See Continuation Sheet)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached sheet

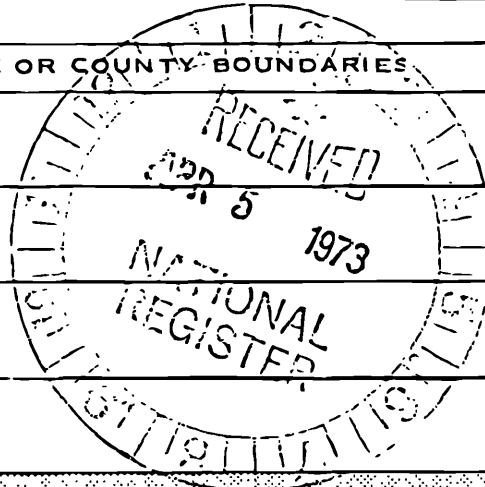
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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° 51' 18.54" N	71° 33' 12.29" W		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	41° 51' 18.54" N	71° 32' 4.01" W				
SE	41° 50' 9.88" N	71° 32' 4.01" W				
SW	41° 50' 9.88" N	71° 33' 12.29" W				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 563 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:
David W. Chase, Survey Director

ORGANIZATION: **Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission** DATE: **Feb. 23, 1973**

STREET AND NUMBER:
52 Power Street

CITY OR TOWN: **Providence** STATE: **Rhode Island** CODE: **44**

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: *Frederick C. Williams*

Title: State Historic Preservation Officer

Date: 3/28/73

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Robert M. Utley
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 4/24/73

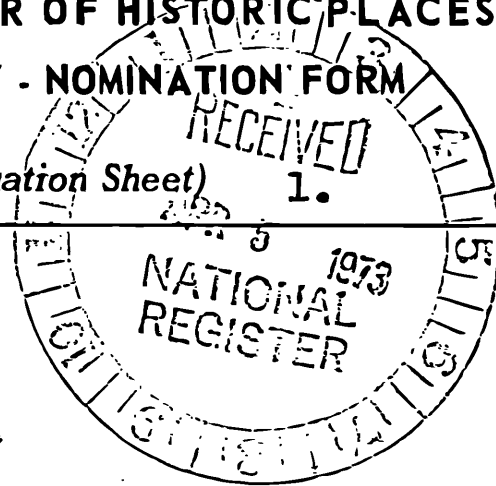
ATTEST:
[Signature]
Keeper of The National Register

Date: 4/24/73

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. Description

other a workshop.

North of Dame Farm is the former Waterman Farm. The fields and orchards of this farm are now overgrown, the farm buildings have been demolished. However, the extensive Waterman cemetery ("G") remains beside Brown Avenue and the Snake Den Quarry ("H"), part of the Waterman property, was used into recent times as a source of trap-rock. Granite blocks from the Snake Den Quarry were used to construct the First Congregational Church in Providence in 1814.

On the west side of Brown Avenue at the north end of the proposed district is the Thomas Brown Farm. All that remains of the farm complex is the house ("I"). This house is similar to the Dame farmhouse and also dates from the eighteenth century. It is better preserved, however, retaining its original massive brick central chimney. The steps at the entrances, fashioned from over-sized slabs of granite, are an interesting feature. Set behind the Thomas Brown farmhouse is a rambling "ranch style" house ("J") of recent date. Before it is the Brown cranberry bog.

South of the Thomas Brown farmhouse is a well preserved late nineteenth century clapboard dwelling ("K"); behind it are two dilapidated barns. Further south is a small early twentieth century bungalow ("L") built by the Dames. The picturesque Winsor Farm is located west of this bungalow. The house and barns ("M") are set well back from Brown Avenue; access is via a lane which runs across open fields and through an orchard. The red painted central chimney of the eighteenth century Winsor farmhouse is visible above the fruit trees from Brown Avenue. Last of the buildings within the district is the Cyrus Brown farmhouse ("N"), a one and a half story gambrel roofed structure also dating from the eighteenth century. It has a five bay front with central entrance; a kitchen ell with farmer's porch and end chimney extends east from the house. South of the Cyrus Brown farmhouse is the hillside pasture land of the former Boyd farm. Boyd Hill acts as a buffer, screening the proposed Brown Avenue Historical District from a recent subdivision and providing visitors an appropriately bucolic introduction to the area.

The buildings within the proposed district are in good condition and are generally well preserved. The Winsor, Cyrus Brown, Thomas Brown and Dame houses, their associated farm buildings, the surrounding land, and Brown Avenue itself

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(Continuation Sheet) 2.

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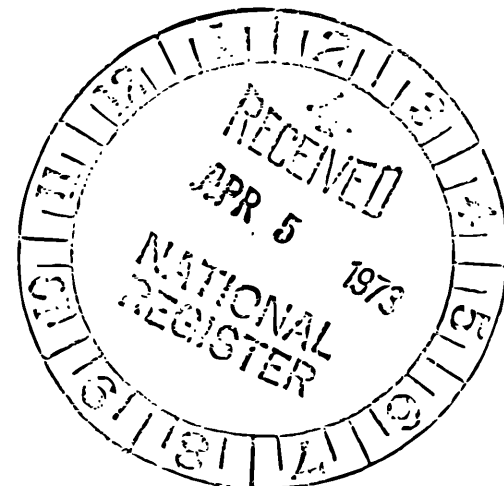
are all important aspects of this nomination. The later dwellings ("J" and "L" on the site plan) do not make a major contribution to the proposed district. Property west of Brown Avenue is privately owned; property east of the avenue is in the Snake Den Green Acres area.

8. Significance

Browns, and the Browns to the Dames. Thirty-eight people lived on the five farms in the proposed district in 1850, including the family of Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus Brown, Sr. with their ten children.

The Brown Avenue Historic District recalls an aspect of Rhode Island life which is fast disappearing -- the moderate sized family farms, owned and worked by generations of old-line Yankee farmers, which provided food for the state's cities and towns during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Preservation of the Brown Avenue Historic District, and most particularly Dame Farm which is open to the public as an educational exhibit, will enable visitors to see and, hopefully, to understand this aspect of their heritage.

The topography of Brown Avenue itself is an important element of this nomination. Brown Avenue follows the natural terrain -- it bends and weaves to skirt rocky outcroppings and fields, it rises and falls according to the contour of the land. It is narrow because there was little traffic when it was built, road building was expensive, and because making it wider would necessitate wasting more farm land as roadway. Brown Avenue is a well preserved rural farm road, retaining not only its form but also the stone walls and fences which bound it, and the woodlots, fields, cemeteries and farm buildings which surround it.



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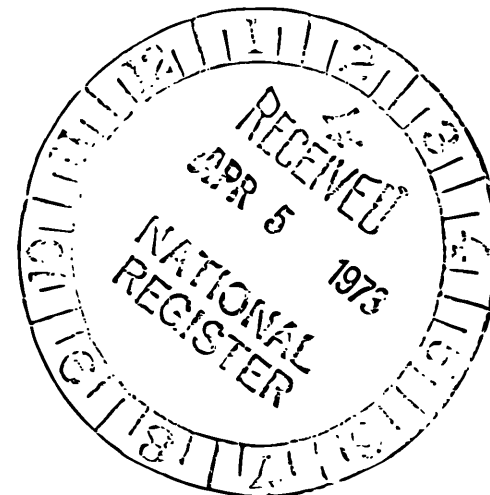
(Continuation Sheet) 3.

STATE	
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COUNTY	
Providence	
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	APR 24 1973

(Number all entries)

9. Bibliography

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(Continuation Sheet) 4

STATE	
Rhode Island	
COUNTY	
Providence	
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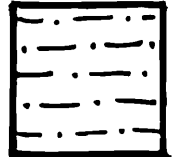
BROWN AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT, JOHNSTON -- KEY TO SITE PLAN:



Granite Quarry

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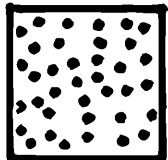
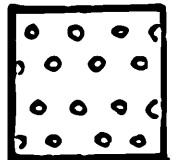
Pastures



Woodlands

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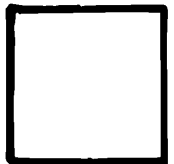
Orchards



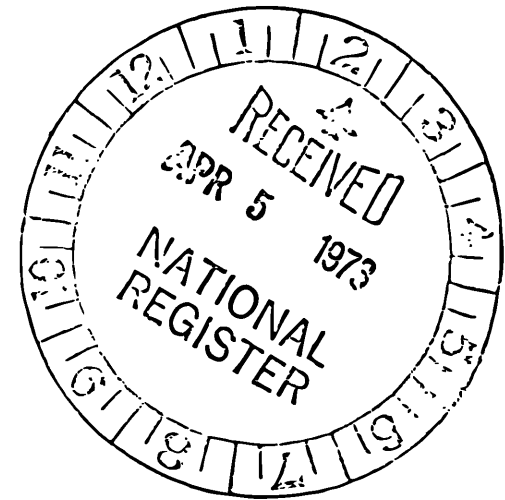
Cranberry Bog

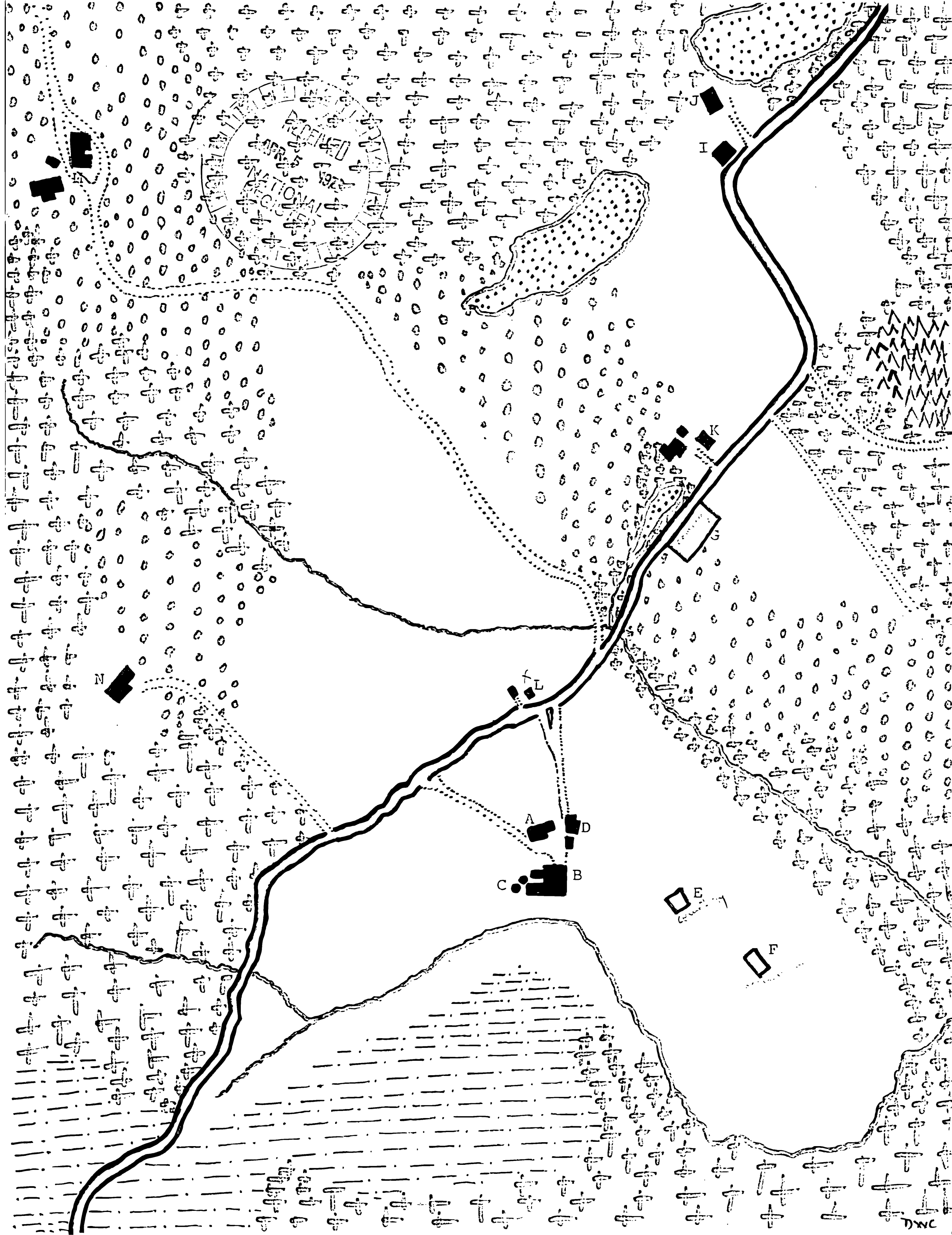
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Open Fields



- A. Dame farmhouse, c.1790
- B. Dame barn, 1910
- C. Dame silos, 1925
- D. Dame farm sheds, c.1790
- E. Dame-Steere cemetary
- F. Dame-Steere cemetary
- G. Waterman cemetary
- H. Snake Den Quarry
- I. Thomas Brown farmhouse, c.1790
- J. "ranch style" house, c.1965
- K. farmhouse and barns, late 19th century
- L. early 20th century bungalow
- M. Winsor farmhouse and barn, c.1790
- N. Cyrus Brown farmhouse, c.1790





BROWN AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT, JOHNSTON
RHODE ISLAND