

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Luke Jillson House

and/or common Fisk House; Jillson-Thomas-Fiske House

2. Location

street & number 2510 Mendon Road

N.A. not for publication

city, town Cumberland

N.A. vicinity of

1 - Rep. Fernand J. St Germain
~~Congressional district~~

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 type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N.A. <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 Mr. and Mrs. Edmond H. Guerin

street & number 2510 Mendon Road

city, town Cumberland

N.A. vicinity of

state Rhode Island 02864

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Town Clerk, Cumberland Town Hall

street & number 45 Broad Street

city, town Cumberland

state Rhode Island 02864

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title See Continuation Sheet 1

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date

federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Luke Jillson House, set facing east toward Mendon Road on a one-acre lot, is a well preserved two-and-one-half-story, flank-gable-roof, clapboard-sheathed, late eighteenth-century dwelling with a five-bay facade containing a central entrance, a pair of brick interior chimneys, and a standard center-hall interior plan with two rooms on each side of the hall. There is a one-story, hip-roof porch with Tuscan columns on the south side of the house, added in the early twentieth century, and to the rear is a square-plan, four-story, pyramidal-roof, late nineteenth-century tower connecting the main block to a long one-story gable-roof ell which was once a blacksmith shop but which is now divided into a garage and a recreation room (Figures 1 and 2).

The focus of the facade is the entrance, composed of fluted pilasters supporting an entablature with a cushion frieze surmounted by a modillion-trimmed cornice and pediment. The house's six-over-six windows are set in heavy projecting frames, some with molded and some with flat-board caps. There is an entrance with a molded cap in the rear of the main block and an entrance with a shed-roof hood in the base of the tower, both fronted by a late twentieth-century stone terrace enclosed by a picket fence, and there are a modern overhead garage door and an entrance to the recreation room on the south side of the rear ell. The space partly surrounded by the house and ell is now a vehicle court, with a circular drive around a large stone watering trough. Behind the house is a small one-story, gable-roof, twentieth-century barn erected on the site of a larger, earlier barn. At the front the lot is bounded by a dry-laid stone wall, with a granite hitching post set in front of the wall at the curb, and a variety of shrubs and trees are informally planted around the grounds, with the remnants of an apple orchard northwest of the rear ell.

The interior of the house, though slightly altered over the years, retains much of its original character (see floor plan). At the rear of the hall, rising over the rear entrance, is a fine triple-run staircase with quarter landings, a heavily molded closed string, and turned balusters and newels (Figure 3). South of the hall are front and rear parlors, the former now used as a formal sitting room and the latter as an informal den or living room. North of the hall are a dining room in front and a kitchen in the rear. There are also small subsidiary spaces flanking each chimney. On the north side of each chimney are large closets opening through to the adjoining rooms. The space to the south of the southern chimney is divided into a shallow cupboard facing the front parlor and a tiny vestibule connecting the rear parlor to a door leading out onto the south porch. The space to the south of the north chimney contains a shallow cupboard facing the dining room and a larger closet off the kitchen which originally contained a very tight, winding service staircase to the upper floors. The first story of the tower contains a rear vestibule connecting to the kitchen and rear ell, a bathroom opening off the kitchen, and a closet opening off the vestibule. The portion of the ell nearest the house is occupied by a one-bay garage, while the outer portion has been

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

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 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 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 ca. 1752 or **Builder/Architect** N.A.

ca. 1776 or 1792

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Luke Jillson House is a significant example of late Georgian domestic architecture which exhibits a level of architectural sophistication and quality unusual in the rural hinterlands of northern and western Rhode Island. Though one source gives 1752 as its construction date, the house was probably erected for Luke Jillson during the last quarter of the eighteenth century, either ca 1776, about the time of his marriage to Anna Sherman, or in 1792. The spacious center-hall plan and ample proportions of the Jillson House were not common features of Rhode Island dwellings of the period even in coastal towns, which were usually more culturally advanced. Their use here serves in part as evidence of the importance of Mendon Road as a transport route, indicating that this area, though removed from major population centers, was not isolated. The Jillson House is an important artifact which can help to document the development and dissemination of building forms and styles throughout the region.

Little is known about Luke Jillson, descendant of a family which pioneered in the settlement of this part of the state. The local historical tradition includes a few anecdotes which characterize Jillson as a perspicacious entrepreneur noted for his ability to engineer shrewd and lucrative business deals. The character of this handsome house attests to Jillson's reputed affluence and prominent standing in the community. Subsequent owners of the property, identified by examination of old maps, have included Philip Thomas (1838), S. Welden or Whelden (1850s or 1860s), F.M. Ballou (1870), and E.W. Fiske (1895). The house is sometimes called the Fisk (sic) House or Jillson-Thomas-Fiske House, both referring to later owners of the property. Major additions made by the later owners, such as the south porch and the tower, have added considerably to the picturesque character of the house, while certain minor changes have detracted very little. The Jillson House remains a well preserved late eighteenth-century dwelling, important as a representative example of a type rarely found outside the more urbanized areas of Rhode Island.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Brown, Frank Choteau, "Rhode Island Houses Along the Blackstone River Valley," Pencil Points, XVI (April 1935), pp. 197-212
(Number 2 in "The Monograph Series," XXI).

(See Continuation Sheet #4)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property about one acre

Quadrangle name Pawtucket

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	9	2	9	7	3	9	0	4	6	4	8	1	8	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is coextensive with lot 273 in assessor's plat 33, as defined by the Town of Cumberland.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert O. Jones, Jr., Senior Historic Preservation Planner

organization Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission date June 1982

street & number 150 Benefit Street telephone 401-277-2678

city or town Providence state Rhode Island 02903

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.

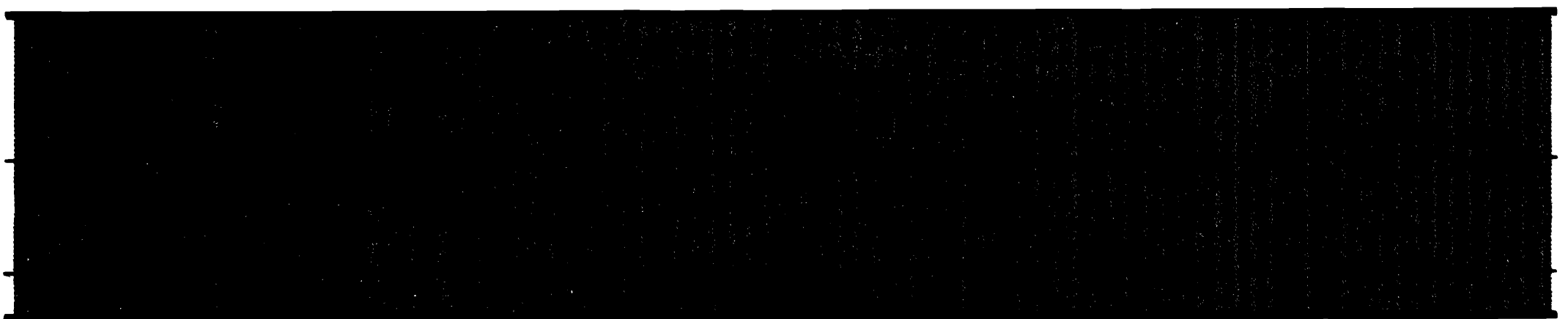
State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Frank Choteau

title

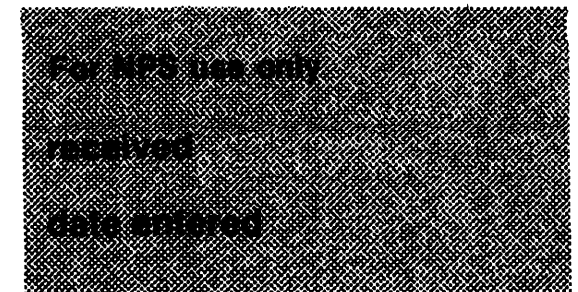
date

7/9/82 (Per Diller)



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Continuation sheet 1

Item number 6

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Historic American Buildings Survey
1955

Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.

(Recorded as Fisk House, Mendon Road, Cumberland Hill)

Preliminary Survey Report -- Town of Cumberland
March 1977

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
Providence, Rhode Island

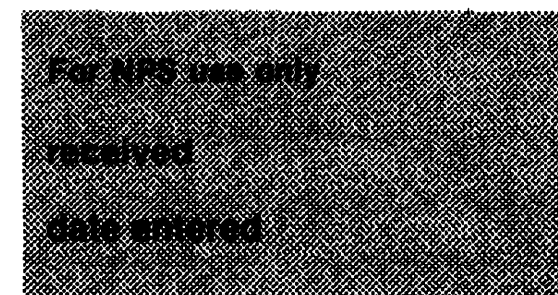
(Recorded as Fiske House)

Phase I Cultural Resource Reconnaissance
Survey for the Reconstruction of Mendon Road,
Route 122, Cumberland, Rhode Island

July 1981

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
Providence, Rhode Island

(Recorded as Jillson-Thomas-Fiske House)

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Continuation sheet 2

Item number 7

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partitioned off and outfitted as a recreation room with a massive, end-wall brick fireplace projecting into the room.

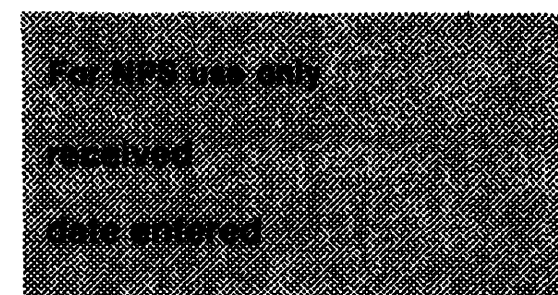
On the second floor are two bedrooms on each side of the center hall and a modern bathroom occupying what was originally the front portion of the hall. The subsidiary spaces on the south side of the southern chimney and the north side of the northern chimney are taken up by large closets opening through to the adjoining rooms. The space north of the southern chimney is divided into separate, shallow closets opening into the adjoining rooms. The space south of the northern chimney is divided into a shallow cupboard opening into the front chamber while the remaining space off the rear bedroom is taken up by part of the original service staircase (removed at first-floor level) winding up to the attic. This rear (northwest corner) chamber connects to the tower, which at this level contains a small hallway, a bedroom closet, a hallway closet, and a tight staircase with winders leading to the upper levels. The third story of the tower connects to the attic of the main block through a gabled passageway. The attic has a large central room with two rooms opening off each side and a bathroom flanked by large closets off the east end. The small subsidiary spaces flanking the chimneys are divided into closets, except for part of the space south of the north chimney, which is occupied by the original service stair leading down to the second floor. The attic is finished as a separate apartment, with a kitchen in the southeast corner room. The staircase in the tower continues up to a little fourth-story observatory room with windows on all four sides. According to local tradition this tower was originally two stories taller but was shortened after it was damaged by fire.

The first floor has the most notable interior finish. The fireplaces remain in all the rooms. Those in the dining room and front parlor (see Figure 4) have one-story mantels with rather flat molded architrave surrounds, fluted pilasters, and cushion-frieze entablatures supporting the mantel shelves. The rear parlor has a late nineteenth-century, Colonial Revival style oak mantel with an egg-and-dart firebox surround, fluted pilasters, and consoles supporting the mantel shelf, all surmounted by an earlier beveled-panel overmantel of pine (Figure 5). The flat-board mantel in the kitchen, with beveled-panel doors to one side covering the oven and wood box and paneling above, is not original and was taken from another Mendon Road house, the W.C. Ballou House, now demolished. All rooms have cased corner posts and all except the front parlor have cornice moldings. The front parlor and dining room have plastered walls and the hall, rear parlor, and kitchen have plastered walls above horizontal-board wainscoting. Plaster surfaces in the front parlor and hall are decorated with stenciling (Figures 3 and 4). This decoration is not original to these rooms, but is copied after stencil work discovered upstairs when the bedroom walls were repapered, and was painted here at the direction of the present owners by Shirley Houde Armstrong. Plastered ceilings

(See Continuation Sheet #3)

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remain in the hall and dining room but have been removed in the front and rear parlors to expose the joists above. In the rear parlor the planks of the floor above are also exposed but in the front parlor the spaces between the joists have been plastered. The kitchen has a plank-and-beam ceiling which is not original. On the second floor, the fireplaces have been closed off except for the one in the southwest chamber, which has a one-story mantel of flat pilasters supporting a broad frieze board with an elaborate jigsaw scalloped-arch pattern. The bedrooms have plaster walls, cased corner posts, cornice moldings, and molded architrave door and window trim with mitered corners. The bathroom has plaster walls above tiled surfaces. There is no noteworthy interior finish in the attic or tower. The recreation room in the rear ell has modern random-vertical-groove, veneered plywood wall paneling. In general the house is in good to excellent condition, and subsequent changes, such as the modern bathroom and kitchen cabinets, have done little to compromise its architectural integrity.

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For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet 4

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Nebiker, Walter, A., Preliminary Survey Report -- Town of Cumberland,
(Providence: March 1977), p. 30.

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Phase I Cultural
Resource Reconnaissance Survey for the Reconstruction of Mendon
Road, Route 122, Cumberland, R.I., (Providence: July 1981), p. 76.

Simpson, Bob, "Cumberland History -- #30," Cumberland Pennysaver
(newspaper clipping, no date available).