

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JUL 24 1979  
DATE ENTERED SEP 10 1979

**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 Joseph Hicks House

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 494 Main Road

CITY, TOWN Tiverton

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF Dist. 1 Hon. Fernand J. St. Germain

STATE Rhode Island

CODE 44

COUNTY Newport

CODE 005

**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	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Mrs. Sylvia Earle

STREET & NUMBER 494 Main Road

CITY, TOWN Tiverton

VICINITY OF

STATE Rhode Island 02878

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Tiverton Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER 343 Highland Road

CITY, TOWN Tiverton

STATE Rhode Island 02878

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Not known to be yet so represented

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 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		

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

The modest Federal style residence begun by bachelor Joseph Hicks for himself in 1788 stands on a grassed hill overlooking old Main Road (now busy and commercialized Rhode Island Route 138) in the northern part of Tiverton. It faces west towards Mount Hope Bay, down to which the Hicks land grant originally ran. The house is a five-bay-wide and two-bay-deep frame and brick structure of two stories covered with a low hipped roof with generously overhanging eaves (see photo 1). It contains a long center hall and four corner rooms on each principal floor. Set upon a foundation or windowless cellar of rubble-stone externally faced by smooth granite, this is a timber-framed, corner-posted structure with clapboard cover for east and west elevations, but with brick used for the north and south ends. Two fairly tall but slim symmetrically placed chimneys rise within each end elevation and have served eight hearths on two floors.

In 1893 a kitchen pantry extension with chamber above was added at the northeast corner of the rear; at the same time, a rectangular one-story bay window was added at the north end of the entrance (west) front, and a one-story railed porch was constructed across the remainder of this elevation (photo 1). The two end walls of brick were covered by clapboarding, and the chimneys were given coatings of stucco. Two-over-two-paned window sash were likewise introduced. Otherwise, the house remains much as it was when originally built. Exterior adornment originally was kept to a noticeable minimum: windows have very plain flat board enframements with no mouldings or cappings and the only modest embellishment to be seen is the plain fascia-board and moulded cornice treatment under the eaves. Otherwise, the outward beauty of this house depends only upon its fine proportions, well-spaced fenestration, and the four vertical accents of the chimneys.

Inside is the formal and elegant eighteenth-century plan of a front-to-back stair-hall flanked by two squarish rooms on each side on both principal floors (see floor plan). On the first floor this hall is divided into two parts by a transverse partition with doors about two-thirds of the way to the rear, thus forming a small oblong entry inside the east, or back, entrance. In its western or front end, in the portion not taken up by the stairwell, the hall is given the rather unusual feature of a shallow coved ceiling.

The main stair to the second floor rises against the south wall of the hall in one long straight run to a small landing where it makes a right-angled turn to the north for its few remaining steps. Where these steps reach the second floor a wooden semi-elliptical arch spans and visually divides the upper hallway into two parts. On the open side of the stairway a thin sawn console form is applied at the end of each

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step. The simple newels, hand-rail, and balusters are all of dark-stained wood. The slightly rounded rail is supported by slim, square balusters; the square newels have simple "cushion" caps and -- at landing and second floor -- acorn pendants. The second-floor hall has been divided (probably in 1893 or soon afterwards) to provide a small sewing-room at its front end and a bathroom at its rear.

On each floor only the two front (western) rooms have notable trim. On both floors, doors at the front of the house have six raised panels; those in the rear portion have only four shallow flat panels. The only rooms to have ceiling cornices (and these are rather conspicuous ones of moulded and carved wood) are the two western rooms on the first floor, and it is these latter rooms which contain the most elaborate mantel treatments in the house. The northwest room has a two-story mantel composed of an entablature (brought forward, and its frieze panelled, at each end) supported by half-round Tuscan columns above which rises a heavily-moulded blind arch also supported by half-round Tuscan columns (see photo 2). The arch has a keystone, and its innermost moulding is ornamented with spaced drilled circles. The southwest room has a two-story mantel exhibiting a lower entablature which breaks out over its supporting fluted Tuscan pilasters; above, a similar pair of pilasters uphold a second entablature with a heavy cornice (see photo 3). The overmantel area here is filled by two narrow and one wide raised panels. In the south-east room at the rear of the house there is a much simpler Federal-style mantel with no upper adornment, while in the northeast room the fireplace has been closed and no mantel remains. From this northeast room there is access to the kitchen and pantry in the rear ell.

On the second floor all four fireplaces, some with original cupboards beside them, remain as do their mantels, which are all one-story Federal designs, simpler in the rear rooms than in the front ones. A chamber, presumably used by children or by hired help, occupies the upper part of the rear ell and has an open stair running down to the kitchen. In the southeast part of this floor, behind a door, a stair rises to a windowless garret under the low hipped roof which has a row of old, primitively rounded timbers supporting its ridge. The original board roofing has, however, been replaced by modern stock.

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Excepting the mentioned additions made in the late nineteenth century, and the cutting-through of an archway between the two principal northern first-floor rooms, the house and its decor remain remarkably intact although in some need of cosmetic repairs. None of the outbuildings remains on the now-diminished but "still-spacious" acreage (except for a well-head and one small, twentieth-century shed). There are extensive stretches of dry-laid stone walls bounding and sub-dividing the property -- probably originally separating fields from pastures and so on -- and there are large trees of considerable age.

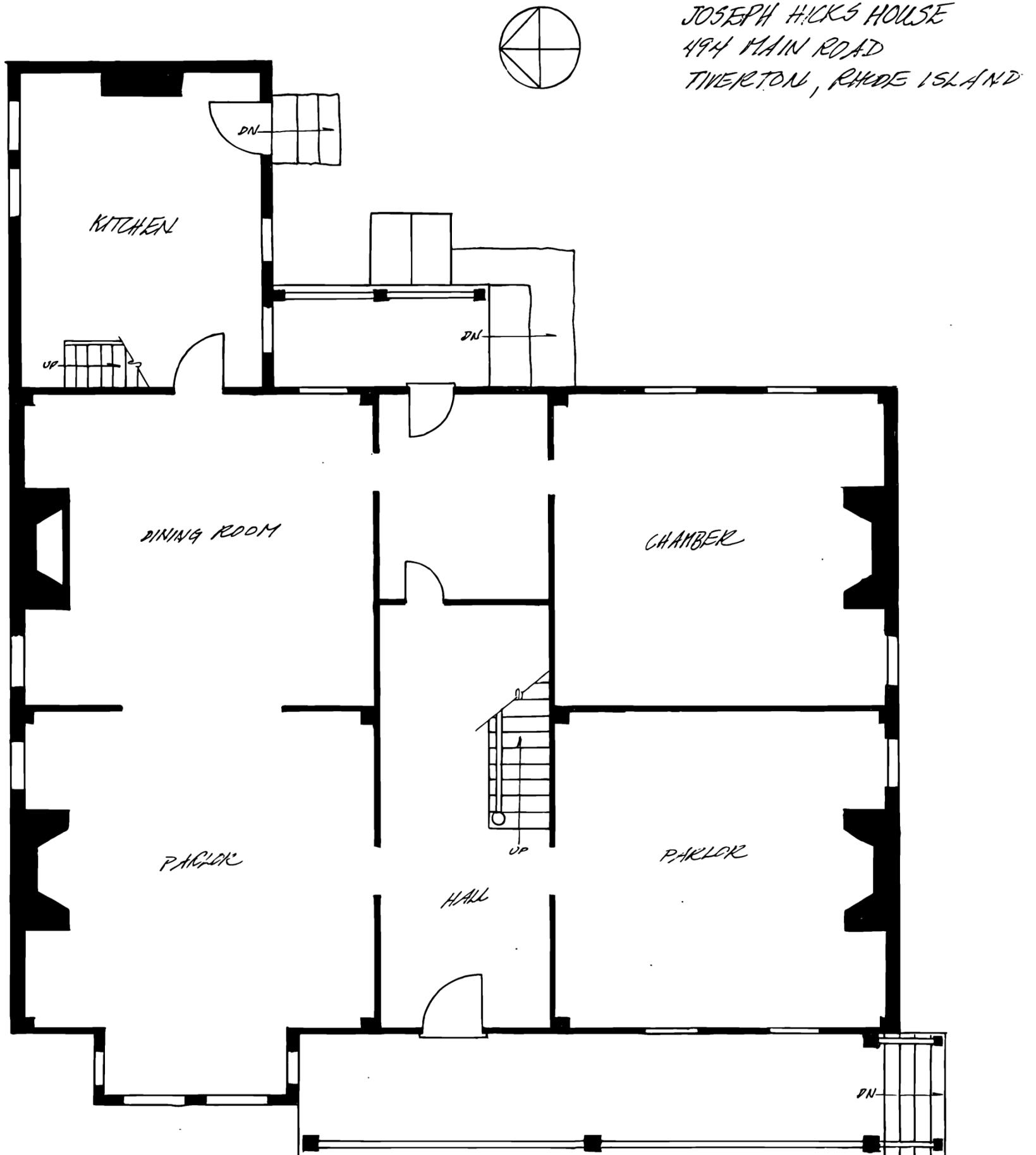
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# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input checked="" 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    1788, 1893    c.1900    BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The primary importance of the Hicks House is its architectural integrity and quality. Other areas of significance include its unbroken association with the Hicks family, early landowners in this area, and its use as small-scale nursey business in the nineteenth century. No research has been undertaken on this business, but such research could shed light on Rhode Island's horticultural history.

The Hicks house is a solitary and somewhat unusual example of a prosperous farmhouse of the late eighteenth century. Unfortunately located in a section whose rural qualities have vanished in the course of post-World-War-II development of busy strip commercial development and crowded ranch and split-level housing, the house does retain approximately three and one-half acres immediately around it giving it a minimal measure of rural character; this acreage is greatly reduced from what the earliest Hickses originally owned as a colonial land grant -- stretching across Main Road to the water and well back to the east. Portions of the property devolved in the nineteenth century to Hicks descendants and relatives by inheritance, marriage, or sale, and some of these have since been re-sold; the last sale of land, for a housing development, took place in 1959. The house and its land remain in the ownership of Hicks descendants.

The Hicks family was quite early established in the Tiverton area, which borders on the Massachusetts line and was a part of that colony until annexed to Rhode Island in 1742. The Hicks land-grant dates, according to present-day descendants, from before 1742 and provided Joseph Hicks with a select site upon which to erect his substantial house in 1788. There was no penny-pinching in its construction, though Joseph was, apparently, a well-to-do farmer and not a rich merchant. It is noted in a local history, A Patchwork of Tiverton, that he "brought brick for the four chimneys and two sides in a rowboat across Mt. Hope Bay from Bristol" and that "he gathered and burned oyster shells to make the whitest of lime for the plaster." The use of brick ends points to a Massachusetts stylistic orientation, brick

See continuation sheet 4

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

A Patchwork of Tiverton, Rhode Island, 1976 Bicentennial Edition, pp 151-152. N. p., 1976.

Works Progress Administration, Federal Writers' Project: Rhode Island. A guide ..., p. 414. Boston, 1937.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY c. 3.5 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	9	3	1	7	6	0	0	4	6	1	4	1	2	0
ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING								

B 

ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING								

C 

ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING								

D 

ZONE		EASTING				NORTHING								

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Fronting westerly upon Main Road, bounded northerly by a recent residential street, easterly by another recent residential street, and on the south by a stone wall and embankment.

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

Richard B. Harrington, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

DATE

August 1978

STREET & NUMBER

Old State House, 150 Benefit Street

TELEPHONE

(401) 277-2678

CITY OR TOWN

Providence, Rhode Island 02903

STATE

## 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

*Frank C. Williams*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

July 11, 1979

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

*Carol Skell*

DATE

9-10-79

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

5-10-78

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ends being far more common in Massachusetts than in Rhode Island building.

The house went by inheritance to siblings, the first to have it being two sisters, Susan and Lydia, who lived nearby but did not occupy the main, unfinished house. They made use of its grounds for a tree- shrub- and plant-nursery business and utilized some downstairs rooms for the potting and sale of their products. Some of the trees and shrubbery which they planted are still to be seen.

When Susan and Lydia Hicks gave up title, Joseph's younger brother, Weston Hicks, took over the place and lived the remainder of his life there. The house was bought from his several heirs by a nephew, John Russell Hicks, who made the small additions and "improvements" of 1893-1900. Since then it has remained in family ownership.