

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **DEC 19 1983**
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Nathaniel Montgomery House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 178 High Street

N.A. not for publication

city, town Pawtucket

vicinity of Congressional district #1
Hon. Fernand J. St Germain

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 | <u>N.A.</u> 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 Joseph L. King, Jr. and Barbara J. King

street & number 504 Weeden Street

city, town Pawtucket

vicinity of

state Rhode Island

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Pawtucket City Hall

street & number Roosevelt Avenue

city, town Pawtucket

state Rhode Island

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Pawtucket, R.I. Statewide
Historic Preservation Report
P-PA-2

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date October, 1978

federal state county local

depository for survey records Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

150 Benefit Street

city, town Providence

state Rhode Island 02903

7. Description

| | | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | date _____ |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Nathaniel Montgomery House, 178 High Street, Pawtucket, is a two-and-a-half-story, center-chimney, frame house with a well-preserved Federal doorway with sidelights framed by pilasters and an entablature. Built c. 1815, for, and probably by, Nathaniel Montgomery, a local carpenter, the house is apparently an early example of tenement housing, built on speculation. On the exterior the house is representative of a house type that was once common in the village but is now rare; inside however, several unusual features, including two pairs of side-by-side fireplaces and bake ovens on the second floor, indicate that the two main floors were originally divided into four apartments sharing the front entrance.

Five bays wide and three deep, with a single-story rear ell, the house has a cedar-shingled gable roof and rubblestone foundations. The exterior is sheathed with clapboards and, with the exception of the doorway, is plainly trimmed with a simply-moulded cornice with partial returns, a crown moulding below the cornice, corner boards and a watertable. Over a door on the south side of the house there is a gabled hood, supported by scroll brackets, that was added c. 1880.

The interior is arranged in an unusual variation of the five-room plan on the two main floors. In the front there is a central stairhall flanked by parlors on the north and south sides of the chimney; in the rear there are two small rooms in the northwest and southwest corners and, instead of the typical single room on the west side of the chimney, there are two rooms, each with a fireplace.

Except for the partition dividing the two rooms on the west side of the chimney, the partitions in the rear rooms appear to have been moved at various times to accommodate bathrooms and other alterations. The current plan (see sketch) reflects a 1982 rehabilitation in which earlier bathrooms and kitchens were removed and new bathrooms and closets were installed in the corner rooms. At the same time, kitchenettes, recessed behind folding paneled doors, were put in each of the parlors.

Most of the interior woodwork is not original, having been replaced during remodellings in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The only major feature that dates from the Federal period is the mantel in the northeast parlor, second story. It is a heavy wooden surround, recently painted brown, with a broad frieze with a central panel, and rudimentary pilasters on the sides. This mantel is not original to the house; it was salvaged from a Rhode Island house and installed here in 1982. On one side of this fireplace there are two bake ovens that have been plastered over and are no longer visible. (Photo #5).

The fireplaces in the southeast parlor, second story, and the rear rooms on both floors have new stained wood mantels, installed in 1982. The original Federal mantels, which were severely deteriorated, were simple wooden surrounds with broad friezes and bed moldings under narrow mantel

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet 1

Item number 7

Page 2

shelves. The mantels in the rear rooms were identical; the parlor fireplace was similar though somewhat larger. The new rear mantels, which are also identical, are plain surrounds with simple border moldings. The parlor mantel has a more prominent shelf than its predecessor, though the profile of the bed molding is similar to the original.

In the course of the 1982 rehabilitation, several alterations were made both to restore deteriorated fabric in compliance with building codes and to restore the house to its original appearance.

The stairway which curves up the east side of the chimney was rebuilt with an inner handrail and linoleum treads, but still retains its original configuration. Six-over-six double-hung sash windows and six-panel doors with simple pine frames have been installed throughout the house, replacing the products of late nineteenth and early twentieth century remodelings. An internal cellar stairway in the southwest corner was removed and a bulkhead entrance was added in the rear. The ell, which now contains laundry facilities and storage space, no longer communicates with the house through an internal passage, but has a separate entrance on the south side.

On the exterior, a deteriorated late nineteenth century portico was removed from the front doorway and an open wooden porch was installed in its place. Crumbling concrete retaining walls along the sidewalk were replaced with rubblestone masonry walls. Slate steps and brick walkways lead to the front and side doors. Storm windows are on all the windows and two fire-escape platforms, painted the same cream color as the walls, have been installed on the rear wall. The small yard in the rear, which is enclosed by a board fence, has a small concrete patio surrounded with newly planted trees and shrubs.

Since the 1982 rehabilitation, the building's four identical apartments have served as housing for the elderly.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

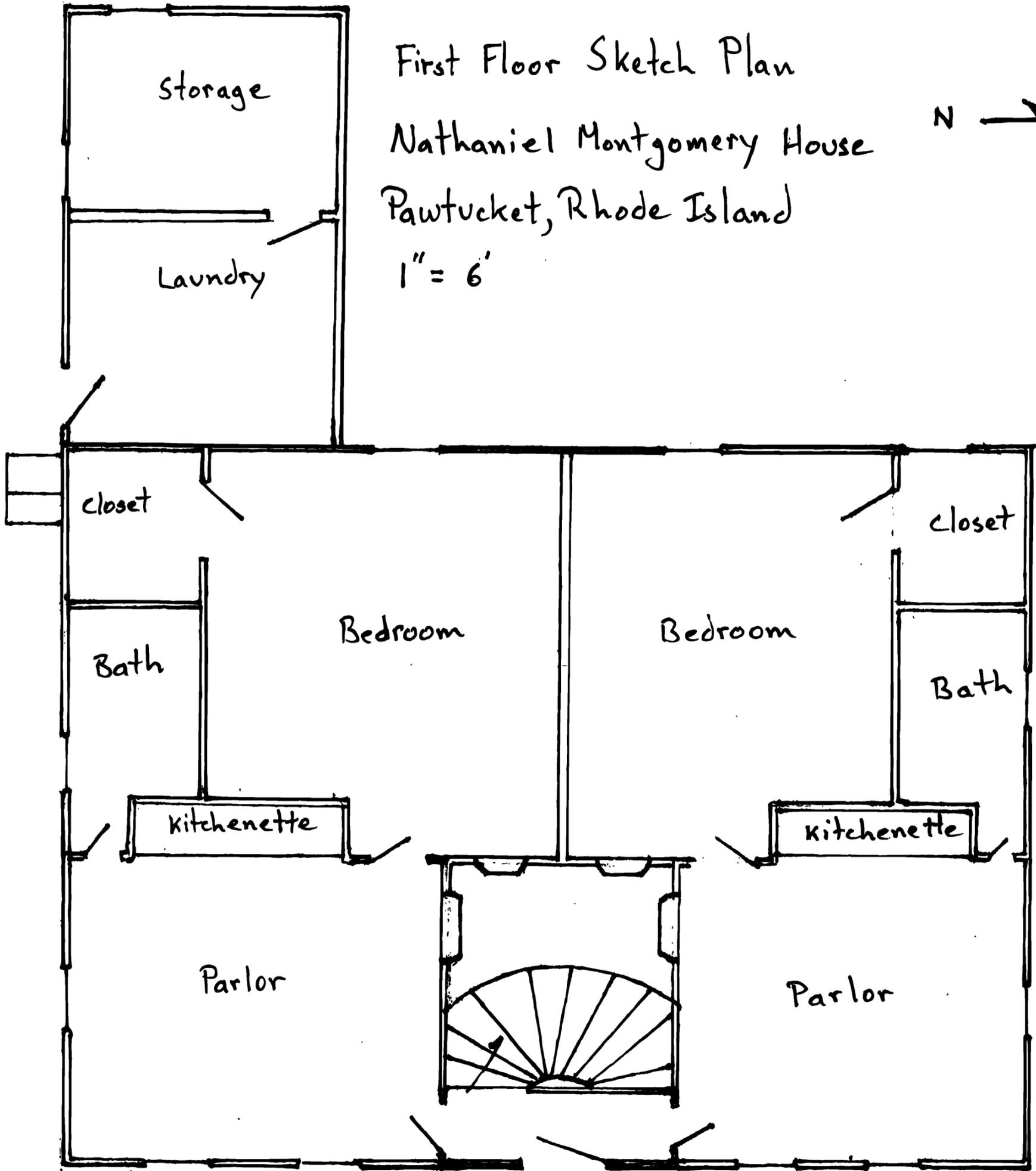
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
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Continuation sheet 2

Item number 7

Page 3



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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900– | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

Specific dates 1814-1816

Builder/Architect Nathaniel Montgomery, carpenter

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Nathaniel Montgomery House, built c. 1815, is the earliest example of tenement housing surviving from the period when Pawtucket was one of the leading centers of the Industrial Revolution in the country. The house is significant both for the information it provides on living conditions in the early period of industrialization and as a demonstration of the ways vernacular buildings adapted traditional house forms to meet new demands.

In November, 1813, Nathaniel Montgomery of Seekonk, Massachusetts, yeoman, purchased a lot, 50' x 70', on the west side of the Chocolate Mill Road (now High Street) in North Providence, from James Mason for \$150.¹ Montgomery's land lay on the northern outskirts of Pawtucket, the manufacturing village on the Blackstone River where Samuel Slater had established the country's first successful cotton spinning mill in 1790. In 1813, the village was experiencing a considerable boom as New England was in the grips of "cotton fever", induced by the War of 1812 and the cessation of trade with England. New cotton mills and machine shops were being built and with them, the stores and houses necessary to accommodate the rapidly expanding workforce.

In April, 1815, Montgomery, now referred to as a carpenter of North Providence, obtained a \$179 mortgage on the lot "and all the buildings standing thereon."² The first specific reference to a dwelling house on the site came in September, 1816, when Montgomery, once again a yeoman, but still of North Providence, sold the land "with a dwelling house standing thereon" to David Wilkinson and Hezekiah Howe, merchants, for \$500.³ Aside from these references in the North Providence Land Records, Nathaniel Montgomery effectively disappears from the historical record, although the house, which was the first to be built on High Street north of Exchange, continued to be known as the Montgomery House well into the nineteenth century. There is no conclusive proof, but it seems likely that Montgomery, seeking to capitalize on the housing shortage in Pawtucket, built the house as a speculative venture.

David Wilkinson, who assumed full ownership of the property in 1817, was a leading member of the prominent Pawtucket family of ironworkers and cotton manufacturers, who had gained a national reputation as a machinist and inventor. In his machine shop in the family's stone factory on Mill Street Wilkinson produced machinery, particularly textile machines, for customers throughout the country. The shop also became noteworthy for the many apprentices who trained there under Wilkinson and then went on to

9. Major Bibliographical References

Benedict, David, "Reminiscences," in the Pawtucket Gazette, December 9, 1853.

(See Continuation Sheet #5)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name Pawtucket, R.I. - Mass.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

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|------|---|---|---------|---|---|---|----------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 9 | 3 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 0 | 8 | 0 |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

B

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| Zone | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

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| Zone | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

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| Zone | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

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| Zone | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

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|------|--|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
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| Zone | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

G

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|------|--|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

H

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|------|--|--|---------|--|--|--|----------|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

The present boundaries of the Montgomery House lot, as described in the
(See Continuation Sheet #6)

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 Richard E. Greenwood, Preservation Consultant

organization

date 7/14/83

street & number 215 Indiana Avenue

telephone 401-461-7193

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

Richard E. Greenwood

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 8 Dec 83

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date

1/19/84

Alvora Byers
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet 3

Item number 8

Page 2

become important machinists in their own right.

Wilkinson presumably used the Montgomery house as a tenement to house workers in his enterprises. The house was probably of better quality than most of the housing provided for Pawtucket millworkers, which was characterized primarily by its "cheapness," and it may have been used for artisans rather than the minimally-skilled factory workers.⁴ There is no record of how many occupants the house would have contained, but houses were in short supply, and considerable density seems to have been the rule. The census taker in 1820 noted ten families, totaling fifty-six people, residing in the "long house" belonging to Almy and Brown, the proprietors of Slater Mill, but this was undoubtedly an extreme case.

In 1826, Wilkinson sold the house to Asa Keene, Jr. and John T. Walker, blacksmiths who had moved from Pembroke, Massachusetts, most likely to find work with David Wilkinson or in another of Pawtucket's many iron-working shops. Neither Keene or Walker maintained a continuous residence in North Providence, perhaps because of the deep depression that followed the Panic of 1829, and the house was probably rented out. By 1839 Walker had moved to Providence where he worked in the Phenix Iron Foundry and in 1844, he sold his interest in the property to Keene. Keene then returned to North Providence after living for a time in Bellingham and Cumberland and took up residence in the High Street house.

The 1857 directory for Pawtucket lists Keene as a farmer; at the time his land holdings included a lot on the south side of the house, where he erected a barn, two lots northwest of the house and another lot on the east side of High Street. Although he could not have been farming in Pawtucket on an extensive scale, there were many large gardens and cultivated lots along High Street at the time.⁵ In the 1869 directory he appears as a plumber, suggesting that his agricultural activities may have been seasonal or taken up when other work was not to be found.

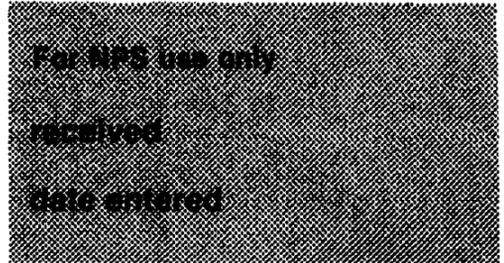
Keene died in 1871, leaving the "homestead" to his daughter, Mary F. Keene, and the barn and its lot to his son Asa, with provisions for converting the barn into a residence. Following Mary Keene's death seven years later the house was divided from a single family residence, back into apartments, one on each floor. In subsequent years, the occupants were generally single women and widows whose professions included music teacher, bookkeeper and schoolteacher.

After a long period of neglect, in 1982 the Montgomery house underwent a general rehabilitation and returned to the original plan of two apartments on each floor. These apartments presently serve as housing for the elderly.

(See Continuation Sheet #4)

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet 4

Item number 8

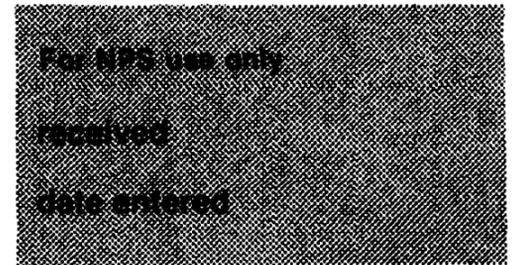
Page 3

Footnotes

1. North Providence Land Records, Book 4, p. 211.
2. Ibid, Book 4, p. 208.
3. Ibid, Book 4, p. 335.
4. David Benedict, "Reminiscences," in the Pawtucket Gazette, December 9, 1853.
5. Henry Clark, "Pawtucket in Village Days, 1840-1903," #23. Scrapbook in the Sidney S. Rider Collection, John Hay Library, Brown University.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet 5

Item number 9

Page 2

Clark, Henry, "Pawtucket in Village Days, 1840-1903," #23. Scrapbook in the Sidney S. Rider Collection, John Hay Library, Brown University.

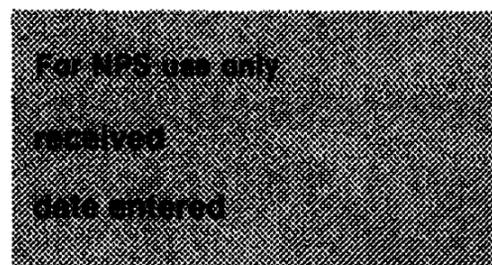
Gilbane, Brendan, A Social History of Samuel Slater's Pawtucket. Unpublished Dissertation, Boston University, 1969.

North Providence Land Records.

Pawtucket House Directories, 1857 to 1936.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet 6

Item number 10

Page 2

Pawtucket Land Records Book 721, Page 1965, describe the same rectangular lot, approximately fifty feet wide and seventy feet deep, that Nathaniel Montgomery purchased in 1814. These boundaries, which enclose the house and lot with no intrusions, constitute the historic boundaries as well.