

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Matthew Lynch House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

120 Robinson Street

-- NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Providence

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

#2 Hon. Edward Beard

STATE

Rhode Island

VICINITY OF

CODE
44

COUNTY

Providence

CODE

007

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

 DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

 PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

 IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

 OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

 YES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTED NO

PRESENT USE

 AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Stanford E. Cameron

STREET & NUMBER

233 Washington Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island 02903

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Providence City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

Dorrance Street at Washington Street

CITY, TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

South Providence. Providence Statewide Historic Preservation Report,

DATE

1977

P-P-2

 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

CITY, TOWN

Old State House, 150 Benefit St., Providence, R.I. 02903

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE C. 1865
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Matthew Lynch house (now so-called although not originally built by Lynch) was first located in what is now Providence's central business district and was moved about 1865 to its present site on an elevated section of flat land in an in-city area known as South Providence. Dating, apparently, from the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century, it is a one-and-one-half-story dwelling of timber frame construction covered by a gambrel roof. It is set facing west upon a high brick foundation, although the original was probably a lower one of stone. The original large central chimney has been rebuilt twice, once when the house was moved -- the old chimney and its base were left behind and a slim new brick chimney built in its place to accommodate parlor stoves -- and again in 1977, when a moderately-sized new brick chimney was constructed to serve the new fireplace in the southwest room.

As first built, the house was five bays wide and two bays deep, with the main entrance located in the center of the longer elevation. At some time, probably in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the house was lengthened on what is now the south end by one bay. This extension did not, however, run back in full story-and-a-half height for the full depth of the house; rather, it created a three-quarters gambrel roofline at the rear, allowing the gambrel end window to remain open. The present owner, Stanford Cameron, has recently filled in this irregularity to make a standard gambrel roofline. In the 1920s or 1930s a small, low, hip-roofed, one-story addition (see Plan A) was pushed out from the southeast corner of the nineteenth century extension and an open porch attached there. Renovation currently being undertaken has already removed these early twentieth century alterations. Current work has also included stripping the dilapidated asphalt siding to reveal the wood clapboards beneath. Clapboards have been replaced as needed.

Exterior trim is minimal and very simple. On the west entrance front the only embellishment is a simple fascia board with a surmounting eaves cornice which is carefully stopped, in profile, at each end just short of the corners of the house. Frugality, no doubt, accounts for the fact that there is no cornice on the rear of the building. Window openings on the front are placed directly beneath the fascia, and their plain board enframements and sills have no mouldings or other trim. The main doorway does, however, have a modest moulding or bevel at the outer edge of its frame. The exterior doors are not original. Some of the nineteenth century two-over-two-paned sash in the principal windows have been replaced with nine-over-nine-paned sash. On the back walls, two windows have been closed off within the past year (see Plan B) and a new window cut in beside an existing window to accommodate the new kitchen. The gambrel peak at the north end of the house has

(see continuation sheet #1)

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one central window of normal size, lighting a second floor chamber, and is flanked by two smaller windows which formerly lighted two "crawl spaces" or storage areas within the lower angles of the gambrel; these spaces have been opened up during the current rehabilitation to provide a larger chamber.

When the present owner acquired the house, the internal arrangement was essentially that of the customary five-room plan dictated by a central chimney (see Plan A). There was a small entrance hall from which an enclosed, steep, and narrow stair angled up in front of the former chimney space. At either side were the two main front rooms, kitchen and parlor, while smaller rooms extended across the rear. As stoves were generally in use in the 1860s when the house was moved, no actual fireplaces were provided in the new brick chimney stack. However, the mantel in the northwest parlor was moved with the house.

This was a handsome mantel with bolection surround and Federal style half-colonettes on low plinths at either side supporting a frieze and a shelf with crisply moulded edging, probably added when the house was enlarged in the early 1800s. Above the mantel was a horizontal raised wooden panel of mid-to-late-eighteenth century type. This mantel was disassembled and narrowed for use with the newly built fireplace in the living room area in 1977. Directly above the parlor, in the principal second floor bedroom, the moulding trim of another fireplace surround survived the 1865 move. The current work has covered or removed this trim as well.

Wooden trim throughout the house was and is modest. Window and door enframements were slim boards with a narrow beaded edge; baseboards were plain; there were no wainscots, chair-rails, or cornice mouldings. Corner posts were cased, some with beaded corners. Most doors had four shallow panels, although one, from the entry to the southwest room on the first floor (since removed) had six raised panels. Nearly all doors had their original hardware, some retaining H-L hinges and leather washers. Most doorframes, doors, floorboards and window frames have been removed during current renovation work, but some doors and door frames may be re-used.

Within the last forty or fifty years some flimsy and easily removable partitions were installed in a few rooms on both floors for closet space and bathrooms; at the same time, apparently, the north

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parlor doorway (on the east wall) was enlarged and fitted with a French door set in a nineteenth-century exterior door frame with sidelights. The entire frame and door were removed when the present owner relocated the eastern partition to provide closet space in the rear northeast room (see Plan B).

In renovating the house for family use, the present owner has rearranged the floor plan (compare Plans A and B) and replaced all the original lathe and plaster walls, interior and exterior, with sheet rock. The greatest changes have been in the entry hall, which has been enlarged by opening it vertically to the roof, by removing the partition and doorway between it and the kitchen to the south, and by removing the original staircase. A broader new staircase of soft pine, which takes two open runs up to the second floor, has been installed. The other major change has been the opening up of the first floor rooms in the southern half of the house into a large combined living room and kitchen (see Plan B).

Although the house was in generally dilapidated condition for a number of years and present renovation work has altered the interior plan, spatial arrangements, and detail, the exterior still reads as an eighteenth century house, despite window changes and the filling in of the southeast (rear) corner of the roofline.

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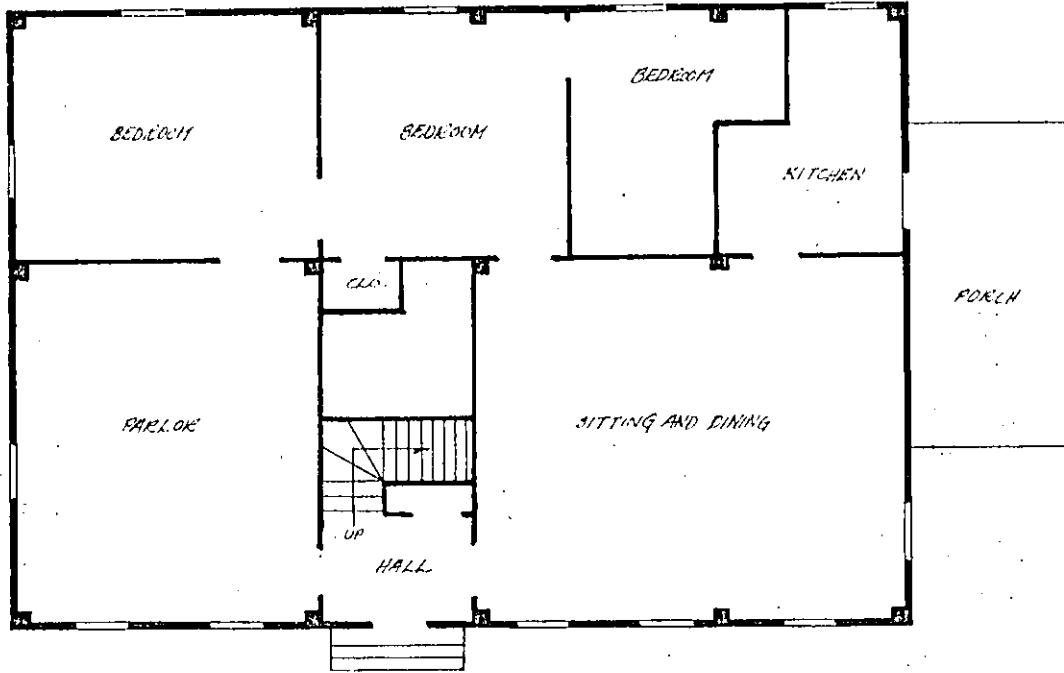
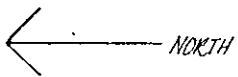
7

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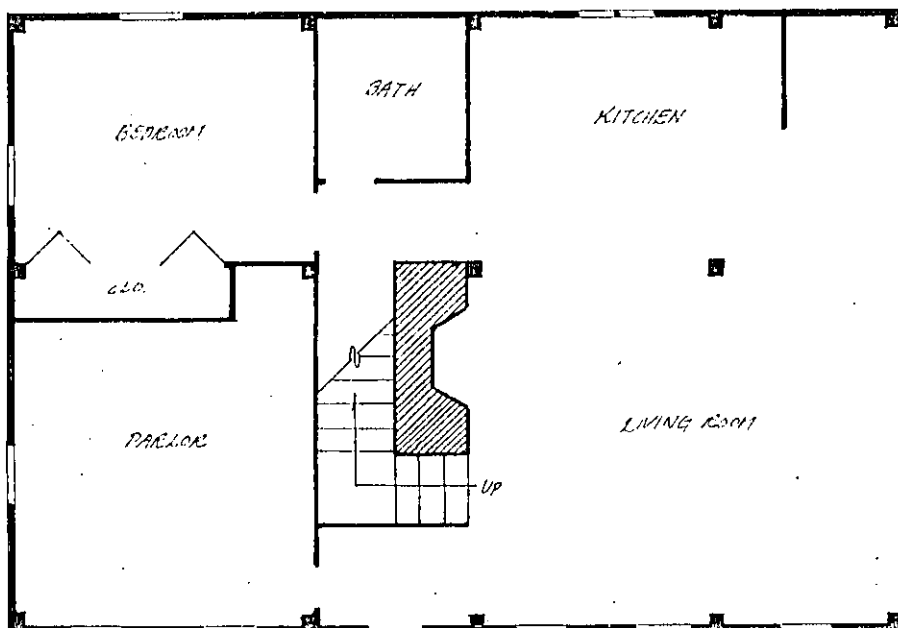
3

MATTHEW LYNCH
HOUSE

SKETCH PLANS - NOT TO SCALE



PLAN A



PLAN B

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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Despite the fact that the Matthew Lynch House has been moved from its original location, it retains a high degree of historic significance for its immediate neighborhood and for the city as a whole. Its site history vividly illustrates the changing patterns of development in Providence and its current rehabilitation may well act as a catalyst for increased pride in and revitalization of the neighborhood within which it stands.

When it was first built, the Lynch house was one of the scattered, outlying farmhouses in the agricultural area west of the "Great Salt River," today, the Providence River. Commercial and urban residential development in Providence was confined to the east side of the river until after the Revolution. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the "West Side" developed rapidly as a residential and commercial area. By the time the Lynch house was moved, about 1865, it was out of place in its immediate surroundings, which had become a busy, sophisticated urban area, still primarily residential but increasingly used for civic and commercial purposes. The Lynch house is said to have been moved, probably by Matthew Lynch, from near the site of Richard Upjohn's Grace Church built in 1846.

The meadowed plateau on the southern edge of the city, to which the house was moved, was being platted and settled in the 1850s and 1860s by Irish immigrants, employed primarily in the nearby slaughterhouses. Anti-Irish sentiment was rampant and, as a result, the growing South Providence Irish community was commonly referred to as "Dogtown." Frequently, too, the only housing available to the Irish newcomers was the cast-off housing of the older native population. The Lynch house was one of several older houses moved into "Dogtown" at this time and is an interesting example of this phenomenon.

In the latter part of the nineteenth century, the open land surrounding "Dogtown" was gradually subdivided into house lots and farming was much reduced. Buildings for small industries replaced the slaughterhouses which had been erected in the Robinson Street-Prairie Avenue area in the 1860s, and the neighborhood became filled with rather closely-spaced, two-family houses and turn-of-the century "triple deckers" which

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housed workers. The family of the Irish immigrant Matthew Lynch, who acquired the lot in 1863 and the house, shortly thereafter, occupied the house until 1937. The property thereafter changed hands several times and was purchased by Donald Bradley in 1954, who retained ownership until 1976.

In recent decades the neighborhood surrounding the Lynch house has suffered serious deterioration, becoming largely an area of tenements in absentee ownership and derelict structures of other kinds. Heavy demolition in the area was undertaken by the Federal Model Cities Program in the 1960s in an attempt to reverse urban blight and begin an upgrading trend. In 1972 the immediate area in which the Lynch house is located was designated for clearance and new construction of single-family houses, under the auspices of the Comstock Urban Renewal Project, undertaken and funded jointly by Model Cities and the City of Providence. Today, the completed Comstock subdivision of pre-fab, ranch style dwellings totally surrounds the Lynch house

Arrangements to relocate the Lynch house in the city's historic College Hill neighborhood were well underway when PACE (people Acting Through Community Effort) and the Urban League requested that the Providence Redevelopment Agency allow the house to remain on its present site because it had become for South Providence residents, not only a landmark, but also a symbol of their hope of revitalizing the neighborhood. As a result of this plea, the accepted developer for the relocation withdrew his application and the house was acquired by a new owner, Stanford Cameron, who, in his words "Knew someone had to fix it up" and is currently rehabilitating the structure for his own occupancy. It is the hope of the neighborhood that his efforts and their visible result may serve as an example and incentive to other owners nearby to reuse and care for the existing building stock in South Providence.

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Young, Charles K.: "Old South Providence," in The Providence
Evening Bulletin, September 28, 1932, p. 5.
City records, directories and maps of Providence and Cranston,
Rhode Island, 1824-1975.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Historic dwelling salvaged," in The Providence Journal,
November 12, 1977.

"Tim O'Neil tells of 'Dogtown' Days," in The Providence Evening
Bulletin, January 4, 1928, Section 2, p. 3.

Wood, W. Edward: "Historic Preservation for South Providence,"
in The Providence Evening Bulletin, February 10, 1975, p. 1

(see cont. sheet #4)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one
UTM REFERENCES

A | 19 | 299150 | 4631030 |
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B | | | | | | | | | | | |
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | | | | | | | | | | | |

D | | | | | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Plat 45 Lot 244

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 B. Harrington, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission December, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

Old State House, 150 Benefit Street

(401) 277-2678

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Providence

Rhode Island 02903

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ___ STATE ___ LOCAL X

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

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 1-11-78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



MATTHEW LYNCH HOUSE
120 Robinson Street, Providence, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger
Date of Photograph: April, 1977
Negative: Rhode Island Historical
Preservation Commission

House from the northwest.

#1



MATTHEW LYNCH HOUSE
120 Robinson Street, Providence, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger
Date of Photograph: April, 1977
Negative: Rhode Island Historical
Preservation Commission

House from the south, showing various additions.

#2



MATTHEW LYNCH HOUSE
120 Robinson Street, Providence, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger
Date of Photograph: April, 1977
Negative: Rhode Island Historical
Preservation Commission

Detail of original south exterior wall, covered
by later half-gambrel addition and now by
completed gambrel.



MATTHEW LYNCH HOUSE
120 Robinson Street, Providence, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger
Date of Photograph: September, 1977
Negative: Rhode Island Historical
Preservation Commission

House from the southeast.

#4



MATTHEW LYNCH HOUSE

120 Robinson Street, Providence, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger

Date of Photograph: April, 1977

Negative: Rhode Island Historical
Preservation Commission

Mantel in northwest parlor.

#5



Matthew Lynch House
Providence, Rhode Island

19 299150 4631030

