

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

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1. Name of Property

=====

historic name SMITH-BALLOU HOUSE

other names/site number _____

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 641 HARRIS AVENUE

not for publication

city or town WOONSOCKET

vicinity _____

state RHODE ISLAND code RI county PROVIDENCE code 007 zip code 02895

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3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Thomas P. Williamson SHPO
Signature of certifying official/Title

12 Feb 03
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official _____

Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

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4. National Park Service Certification

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I, hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper _____

Date of Action _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>2</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
<u>2</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Total

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Category/Subcategory:

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Category/Subcategory:

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC/Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne

LATE 19th & EARLY 20th CENTURY AMERICAN

MOVEMENTS/Craftsman

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/Granite

roof STONE/Slate

walls STONE/Granite

WOOD/Shingle

other _____

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE ATTACHED CONTINUATION SHEETS

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1905-1953

Significant Dates

1906

1920-1922

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE ATTACHED CONTINUATION SHEETS

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

SEE ATTACHED CONTINUATION SHEETS

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property About 2 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
1 19 290950 4654050 3 _____
2 _____ 4 _____
____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) SEE ATTACHED

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) CONTINUATION SHEETS

=====
11. Form Prepared By
=====

name/title KATHRYN J. CAVANAUGH, CONSULTANT

organization _____ date DECEMBER 3, 2002

street & number 197 SIXTH STREET telephone 401-273-4715

city or town PROVIDENCE state RI zip code 02906

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Additional Documentation
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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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Property Owner
=====

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

=====
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

**SMITH-BALLOU HOUSE, 641 HARRIS AVENUE
WOONSOCKET, PROVIDENCE CO., R.I.**

Architectural Description

The Smith-Ballou House at 641 Harris Avenue in northwestern Woonsocket stands in a block bounded by Harris Avenue on the west, Gaskill Street on the north, Woodland Road on the east, and Winter Street on the south, just outside the North End Historic District (NR, listed 1982). Constructed in 1906 for two elderly sisters, Mary F. Smith and Sarah J. Ballou, this 5,000 square foot, 2-1/2-story, stone and wood single-family house combines Queen Anne and Arts & Crafts style influences and retains a high degree of integrity of both design and materials despite several alterations and the construction of a freestanding two-car garage ca. 1920 by the house's second owners, Alonzo and Lena Farnell. Originally the house stood on about five acres of land, which the Farnells subdivided in 1938; what remains of the original land area are three abutting lots containing a total of about two acres, all included in this nomination.¹

The Smith-Ballou House was built at a time when this northwestern corner of Woonsocket had not yet seen much residential development. Only two houses are known to predate the Smith-Ballou House in this block: one of them, coincidentally built in 1903 by Mary F. Smith's son (and Sarah J. Ballou's nephew) Stanley G. Smith, stands next door at 603 Harris Avenue.² The remainder of the block, largely built out between the late 1930s and the late 1950s, has a predominantly suburban appearance, characterized by large lots, deep front yards, and homes of 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 stories.

Set back several hundred feet from both Harris Avenue and Gaskill Street, the Smith-Ballou House originally occupied a prominent hilltop location; its siting, orientation and outdoor living spaces all suggest that the house once commanded extensive views overlooking Harris Avenue to the west and south. Those views have since been obscured, both by the growth of trees (especially west of the house) and by the construction of over a dozen adjacent mid-20th-century single-family homes. The house may once have been visible from both Harris Avenue and Gaskill Street, but is now completely hidden from view.

Despite its street address the Smith-Ballou House has no direct vehicular access to or from Harris Avenue. (The house no longer shares a long curved driveway leading from Harris Avenue to 603 Harris and two adjacent properties in the interior of the block.) Instead, the Smith-Ballou House may be reached via a narrow paved alley called Gaskill Court, about 10 feet wide by 204 feet long extending south from Gaskill Street. An asphalt driveway approximately 12 feet wide and 200 feet deep extends west from Gaskill Court along the south boundary line of the house lot, ending next to the southwest corner of the house. At the

¹ Woonsocket Tax Map B-2, Lots 12-254, 12-113, and 12-148 – see NR Part 10, Boundary Justification.

² Stanley Smith's house first appears in the Woonsocket Tax Book in 1903. The other early house stands at 43 Winter Street (near the corner of Harris Avenue): the Charles E. Ballou House, ca. 1879. Charles Ballou evidently was not directly related to the original owners of 641 Harris Avenue.

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southeast corner of the house is a 3-foot wide concrete walkway, extending from the driveway northward to wrap around a service wing at the east end of the house. The land north and east of the house itself is mostly lawn, with shrubs and other plantings next to the house and a scattering of mature trees in the yard. A tall, thick screen of coniferous trees also lines the south edge of the driveway, and additional trees stand along the west and north property lines. The land area west of the house is heavily wooded, with both deciduous and coniferous trees as well as shrubbery.

The unknown architect/builder of the Smith-Ballou House used a mix of Queen Anne and Arts & Crafts elements in its design.³ The Queen Anne influence (popular for domestic buildings from about 1880 to 1910) can be detected in the irregular floor plan, asymmetrical massing, and varied exterior wall surfaces created by changes in vertical plane, bay windows, porches, and a diversity of materials and textures. The Arts & Crafts aesthetic (prevalent from about 1900-1930), with its emphasis on high standards of design, honest craftsmanship, and natural materials, can be found in the interior wood trim, stained and leaded glass windows, massive mantelpieces, cabinetry, and light fixtures. Architectural features such as porches, terrace, sizeable windows, and sunroom are not only found in the Arts & Crafts style particularly, but also typify the early 20th century suburban ideal of enhanced connections to nature.

Exterior Architectural Features

The Smith Ballou House, 2-1/2 stories tall, has an irregular massing and footprint, with a terrace on the west and south sides, projecting bay windows on the north, and a 2-story service wing on the east. Both massing and footprint were modified ca. 1920 (between 1919-1922) at the southwest corner of the house, when a screened porch was added at the first floor level and a sunroom was enclosed on the second floor.⁴ The entire house stands on a raised stone foundation. Both the main block and the service wing have hipped roofs clad in gray slate, with deep wood-bracketed eaves and wood-shingled dormers. The exterior walls are stone on the first floor and wood shingles (painted dark red) on the second floor; the shingled walls project slightly over the stone walls, with wood brackets marking the division between first and second floors. Most wood trim elements on the house are painted a cream color. The house also has three interior brick chimneys, each with a corbelled brick cap.

³ No record of the architect's name has been found.

⁴ Woonsocket tax books 1918-1922 indicate an total increase of \$7,400 in assessed value of buildings and improvements at 641 Harris Avenue: from \$13,500 in 1918 to \$16,100 in 1920 to \$20,900 in 1922. (Tax books for 1919 and 1921 were not available at either Woonsocket City Hall or the Woonsocket Free Library.) This increase is almost certainly explained by the construction of the screened porch, sunroom, and garage.

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Of the four elevations of the main house, the two most formal architectural compositions are found on the west, facing Harris Avenue, and the north, facing Gaskill Street (although, as noted above, neither of these elevations is currently visible from the street). While an entrance in the south elevation currently functions as the "front door," it appears that in fact the west elevation was originally designed to be the primary façade.

The west façade facing Harris Avenue is divided into three bays, with the right-hand bay set back the full depth of the middle and left-hand bays. Across the entire base of the west façade is an elevated stone terrace approximately 12 feet wide, with a flight of stone steps at its northern end leading down to the lawn. A stone retaining wall, with a metal sundial in its cap near the steps, supports the terrace; the grade rises uphill from north to south, so the wall height varies from about 6 to about 3 feet. Overlooking the terrace, in the left-hand and middle bays of the first floor, are two large, elaborate, wood-framed windows: at left are three 1/1 double hung sash windows surmounted by squares of leaded and stained glass (living room), while in the middle is one 1/1 window with leaded and stained glass above it (reception room). The terrace wraps around the southwest corner of the middle bay and leads to an elaborate doorway in the right-hand bay, with a paneled wood and glass door surrounded by leaded glass sidelights and transom, all framed by thick wood mullions. (This would originally have been one of the principal entrances into the house: it opens into the main stair hall.) A one-story screened porch added ca. 1920 now encloses this right-hand bay, including the original west entrance, and the entire south side of the L-shaped terrace. The porch is framed with pairs of simple wood columns capped by egg-and-dart moldings; its hipped roof is clad in asphalt shingles. Double screen doors in its north side open onto the terrace (another pair of screen doors opens on the south side of the porch). At the second floor level in both the left and middle bays are 3-sided, wood-framed bay windows with wood brackets underneath, featuring two diamond-paned casements in the center and single-light vertical windows in the sides, all surmounted by leaded glass. In the right-hand bay on the second floor, perched on top of the screened porch but about one third of its size, is an elaborately decorative wood and glass sunroom with wood shingles on its base. This sunroom was also constructed ca. 1920 and may have enclosed an earlier sleeping porch. At the attic level, centered above the left-hand and middle bays, is a double dormer with 1/1 metal replacement windows.

The north elevation of the house faces Gaskill Street, and like the west façade is also divided into three bays. At the basement level, recessed into the stone foundation, are three wood-frame 3-light horizontal windows. At the first floor level, an ornate 4-sided wood and stone bay window projects from the façade in both the left-hand and right-hand bays; each of these bay windows features leaded and stained glass, wood brackets, and heavy framing at the sides capped by ball finials. (These bay windows are in the dining room and living room, respectively). At the second floor level, centered over the each of bay windows below, is a pair of 8/1 wood double hung (bedroom) windows; in the middle bay is a 6/1 wood double hung (bathroom) window with an elaborate wooden surround. At the attic level, slightly off-center

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from the bay windows below, are two paired dormers with 1/1 metal replacement windows in them.

The east elevation of the main house faces Gaskill Court, and is largely covered by the 2-story service wing. At the first floor level, to the right of the service wing, is a triplet of wood-framed, leaded and stained glass casement windows (dining room). Above that are one 8/1 wood double-hung window at the second floor level (bedroom), and a dormer in the attic with a metal 1/1 replacement window, butting up against a neighboring dormer in the service wing.

The service wing projects about 12 feet from the east elevation of the main block. At its northeast corner is a flight of five steps (the bottom step is granite, the rest wood), perpendicular to the north elevation and leading up to the back porch; the stair railing is wood, with wood lattice underneath the stringer. Immediately to the right of the stairs (also perpendicular to the north elevation) is a roughly 6-foot tall wood-shingled bulkhead giving access to the basement. The bulkhead has a flat rubber membrane roof and two sets of wood and glass doors (one a pair of double doors, the other a single-leaf door) with screen doors in front of them. The back door at the top of the steps has a 4-light transom over a replacement wood and glass unit fronted by an aluminum-frame storm door. The wood-framed porch extends the full depth of the service wing and shelters two 8/1 wood double hung windows, one in the north elevation (kitchen) and one in the east elevation above the bulkhead (butler's pantry). At the second floor level of the service wing's north elevation is one 8/1 wood double-hung window (bathroom), set very close to the inverted corner formed by the service wing and the main block; above that is a small dormer containing a 1/1 metal replacement window.

The east elevation of the service wing faces Gaskill Court. A concrete-lined areaway roughly two feet deep is cut into the ground in front of two 6/6 wood double hung basement windows, which are recessed into the stone foundation wall. To the right of the basement windows, two projecting stone blocks form steps up to a large stone platform, which sits over the right-hand basement window perpendicular to the exterior wall. This platform was used for the delivery of ice: several feet above the platform is a recessed wooden panel marking the location of the original ice box in the kitchen. That wooden panel is surmounted by a heavy stone lintel, above which is recessed a narrow horizontal wood single-light window. To the left of the ice delivery area is another 8/1 wood double hung window (kitchen), also recessed into the stone wall and aligned with the basement window below. To the right of the ice delivery area is the back porch, with stone corner post and wooden railings; under the wooden porch deck is another wood-frame basement window, this one narrow and horizontal with three glass lights. On the second floor are two wood-frame 8/1 double hung windows (bedroom); in the attic level is a single dormer centered in the slope of the roof.

The south elevation of the service wing, east of the main block, is set back several feet behind the south façade. Recessed into the stone wall of its first floor are two 8/1 wood frame double

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hung windows (kitchen). At the second floor level, a leaded-glass bay window with wood shingles at its base is centered in the wall (bedroom); another smaller, very narrow rectangular single-light window is tucked into the wood wall where it meets the main block (back stairs). In the attic level is a paired dormer with 1/1 metal replacement windows.

The south elevation of the main house faces the driveway. What is now the front door (and may always have been the preferred entrance for visitors arriving by car) is left of center, recessed under a deep, cantilevered, bracketed hood with an asphalt roof. Leaded glass sidelights and transom lights, framed by thick wood mullions, surround the heavy paneled wood and glass door. A flight of four stone steps leads to the front door; the stairway is approximately 10-12 feet wide and also provides access to the adjacent screened porch to the left. Simple wrought iron railings stand on the either side of the front steps. To the right of the front door, a pair of diamond-paned wood frame casement windows is recessed into the stone wall. On the second floor, centered above the front door is a wood-frame double-hung window with decorative upper sash and decorative wooden surround. To its right, centered above the casement windows below, is an elaborate window framed by thick wooden mullions, featuring four leaded glass casements below eight square-shaped fixed stained glass lights. (This large window illuminates the main stairway.) In the attic level, centered on the façade below, is a single dormer with a replacement metal 1/1 double-hung sash.

Of the exterior features described above, all appear to be original with the exception of the screened porch and sunroom, added ca. 1920 by Alonzo and Lena Farnell (who owned the house from 1913-1953). A subsequent owner replaced roofing materials on the porches, bulkhead, and south door hood, replaced the back door, and replaced all the dormer windows (dates unknown).

The property contains one outbuilding, a two-car garage also constructed by the Farnells ca. 1920, standing some 60 feet east of the house. Its off-center metal and glass overhead garage door (not original) faces east, and a concrete apron about 18 feet square gives access from Gaskill Court. The garage is one story tall, with a hipped roof and stuccoed concrete block walls painted dark red to match the house; at the peak of the roof is a curved metal finial. The north and south elevations each contains two 6-light wood casement windows. The west elevation, facing the house, contains a single-leaf wood and glass door, and a blind window.

Interior Architectural Features

The Smith-Ballou House has eight rooms on the first floor. Four of these rooms are "public" (that is, readily visible to guests): the entrance hall, reception room, living room, and dining room; four are "private" or service-oriented, including the power room, anteroom, kitchen, and butler's pantry. All of the public rooms are elaborately decorated with various Arts & Crafts elements, and each has faux ceiling beams of dark varnished wood, a hallmark of the style.

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(Other interior trim elements - wainscotting, window and door surrounds, mantelpieces, built-in shelves, and window seats - typically have the same dark finish.) Unless otherwise noted, the hardwood floors in all public rooms are white oak parquet outlined with a perimeter of Brazilian cherry, with Celtic knots at the corners. Throughout the house, all walls and ceilings are of plaster unless otherwise noted.

Just inside the south doorway is a large entrance hall with wood wainscotting on its walls. On the right (east) side of the hall is a wide, triple-run stairway with three landings, rising to the second floor; heavy posts mark the bottom of the stairway, and its railings have turned balusters. A small powder room is tucked under the stairway's uppermost landing, behind a solid wood paneled door; its porcelain toilet and marble corner sink may be original. On the left side of the hall is the original west entrance to the house (now opening onto the screened porch), with a heavy wood frame, paneled wood and glass door, and leaded glass sidelights and transoms. An Arts & Crafts-style light fixture is suspended from one of the faux ceiling beams. Three "public" rooms open off the entrance hall.

On the west side of the entrance hall, just beyond the porch door, is a small, square reception room with an open entryway, flanked by paired wood columns above built-in shelves with leaded glass doors. Each of its three walls has wood-framed windows in it, all of them featuring leaded glass with diamond-shaped panes. In the south wall, a triplet of windows looks out onto the screened porch; over each window is a square transom containing a circle of stained glass featuring images of sailboats. (Reading from left to right: a small sailboat against a dark night sky and red landscape; a larger sailboat against a background of shrubs and a tower; and a small sailboat on purple water against a background of red trees.) In the west wall, a double hung 1/1 window with leaded-glass, diamond-paned transom looks out onto the terrace; in the center of the transom is a circle of stained glass featuring an image of a tower on a river bank, purple water, and a light green sky. In the north wall, a horizontal window with four panels of leaded glass looks into the adjacent living room; each of these panels features diamond-shaped panes surrounding a circle of clear glass. Arts & Crafts-style wall sconces flank the west window, and a chandelier of similar vintage is suspended from one of the faux ceiling beams.

The living room, at the northwest corner of the house, has an open entryway directly opposite the front (south) door. On the south wall of the living room is a fireplace surrounded with ceramic tile, and surmounted by a massive decorative wood mantelpiece rising to the ceiling. To the right of the fireplace are several built-in shelves, as tall as the mantel, with leaded glass doors; above these is the horizontal window looking into the reception room described above. In the west wall is a three-part window, with 1/1 sash underneath leaded and stained glass transoms. In each of the three transoms are diamond-shaped clear glass panes surrounding a circle of stained glass, all showing landscape scenes. (Reading from left to right: green hills and trees against a blue sky; a brown lane leading to a red house, green trees, and blue sky; and a lane passing by a house, with green trees and blue sky.) In the living room's north wall is

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a bay window framed in dark wood, with wood panels under four 1/1 windows, each with leaded and stained glass transoms above, each configured with diamond panes surrounding a circle of stained glass depicting landscape scenes. (Reading from left to right: a red bridge over green water, and a small house; a tower set against green trees and blue sky; a tower, a house in a valley by a yellow pathway, and trees; and a purple bridge over water, with trees, hills and sky.) Arts & Crafts-style sconces project from the mantelpiece and flank the north window, and a chandelier of similar vintage is suspended from one of the faux ceiling beams. In the east wall of this room, pocket doors open to the dining room.

The dining room, in the northeast corner of the house, also has an open entryway from the main entrance hall. This room features a white oak parquet floor trimmed in American (instead of Brazilian) cherry, with Celtic knots in the corners, and matching cherry wood paneling rising about three-quarters up the height of each wall. In the north wall, a bay window with window seat is framed in carved wood; its four 1/1 windows have leaded and stained glass transoms in the same configuration as found in the living room's bay window. The circles of stained glass in the north windows depict landscapes and sailing scenes similar to those found elsewhere in the house. (Reading from left to right: a large purple sailboat on water; a windmill and a tower on a riverbank; a yellow bridge over water, a windmill, and trees; and a sailboat, a red bridge, and hills.) In the dining room's east wall is a triplet of leaded glass diamond-pane casement windows, each with a circle of stained glass showing familiar themes. (Reading from left to right: a tower, orange hills, and a pathway; a castle on rocks; and a sailboat on red water with a pink sky). On the south wall of the room is a fireplace surrounded with rose quartz tiles and surmounted by a massive decorative wood mantelpiece rising to the ceiling. (The carving on this mantelpiece is different from that in the living room.) To the left of the fireplace is a wood door leading to the butler's pantry and kitchen. Pairs of Arts & Crafts-style sconces project from the mantelpiece and flank both the north and east windows; a chandelier (not of the Arts & Crafts period) is suspended from one of the faux ceiling beams.

Access to the service wing may be obtained not just from the dining room but also from the northeast corner of the entrance hall, by passing through a wooden door into a small anteroom. The anteroom has a small closet at its north end and the entrance to the basement stairs at its south end. East of the anteroom is the kitchen, with two windows in its south wall, one in its east wall and one in its north wall (all 8/1 wood windows). North of the kitchen, between it and the dining room, is the butler's pantry, with all of its original cabinetry and plumbing; a 6/1 window in the east wall of the butler's pantry looks out onto the back porch. The current owners have remodeled the kitchen: it has new sheetrock on all the walls, new cabinetry and appliances, and a new partition wall on the kitchen's north side to create a mudroom adjacent to the back door. The back door, in the north wall of the mudroom, leads to the back porch. In the west wall of the kitchen is a doorway to the back stairs rising up to the second floor and attic. The west wall also exhibits evidence of a stovepipe connection to a chimney flue. The kitchen

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also contains an original annunciator panel, which would have allowed residents and guests to signal servants from elsewhere in the house.

The second floor of the house has nine rooms (and several closets): in the main house, three bedrooms, a bathroom, a sunroom, and what may have been a sitting room or study all open onto a large square hall at the top of the main stairway; while in the service wing are another bedroom, dressing room and bath. For such a large house, the second floor rooms are fairly small, especially relative to the size of the hallway; this may be explained by the fact that the house was built for two elderly sisters, and not a large family. Throughout the second floor, all walls are plaster, all floors are hardwood (white oak with Brazilian cherry perimeter and Celtic knots in the corners – different knots than found on the first floor), and all ceilings are plaster except in the main hall, where the ceiling is now sheetrock.

In the south wall overlooking the stairway is a large, elaborate four-part window: four fixed lights of diamond-paned leaded glass, each with two square transoms of leaded and stained glass above it. As elsewhere in the house, the transoms feature diamond panes of clear glass surrounding circles of stained glass depicting landscape scenes. (Top row, reading left to right: a yellow bridge and a tower; a large tree and hills; a large house and hills; and three trees on rolling hills. Bottom row: pink tree and hills; large tree and river; house, tower, and hills; and house, yellow path, and hills. In all the top row images, the sky is green; in all the bottom row images, it is dark blue.)

On the south side of the hallway, west of the stairs, is a small room with a single 1/1 window in its south elevation, and another 8/1 window in the west elevation (originally an exterior wall) looking out onto the adjacent sunroom. This may originally have been a guest bedroom, although it is quite little and lacks a private bath; or, it may have had some other auxiliary function. (In what is now a small closet northeast of the stairs is some tile flooring, which may indicate that this closet was partitioned off from an adjacent bathroom to the east. If that is the case, the original doorway to the bathroom would probably have been in the west wall of the closet, opening directly into the stair hall, and therefore accessible to an occupant of the south bedroom.)

In the southwest corner, elevated one step above the second floor level, is the sunroom, with French doors opening into the hall. The interior walls of the sunroom are wood shingle, covered with a white lattice, clearly indicating that the sunroom was added after the original house was constructed. (This may have been a sleeping porch at first, enclosed when a number of other improvements were made to the house by the Farnells ca. 1920). A 1920s-era light fixture is suspended from the ceiling. An opening in the north wall looks into the adjacent room. The floor is covered with indoor/outdoor carpet.

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North of the sunroom is a small room facing west, with wood paneling on the walls, built-in shelves with glass doors flanking the open entryway, and a bay window with leaded glass diamond pane casements in the west elevation. In the south wall is a large opening, topped with latticework, which looks into the sunroom. This room's original purpose is unknown (lacking a door, it clearly cannot function as a bedroom); it was probably refinished around the time the sunroom was added, and may have been used as a sitting room or study by the Farnells or later occupants of the house.

As befits a house built for two sisters, on the north side are two large bedrooms that are virtual mirror images of each other, flanking a shared bathroom and a group of three closets. (One of the closets, its walls lined with cedar, opens onto the main hall.) The northwest corner bedroom (over the living room) has a fireplace with a simple painted wood mantelpiece projecting from its south wall, a bay window with leaded glass casements in its west wall, a pair of 8/1 windows in its north wall, and bathroom and closet doors in its east wall. The connecting bathroom is sited against the north wall of the house; its walls are plaster and white tile, and the floor is also tiled; the porcelain tub and sink appear to be original, while the toilet is a modern fixture. This bathroom has a 6/1 window in the north wall. The northeast corner bedroom (over the dining room) has a fireplace with a simple painted wood mantelpiece projecting from its south wall, a pair of 8/1 windows in its north wall, a single 8/1 window in its east wall, and bathroom and closet doors in its west wall.

East of the second floor main hall is a short, narrow passageway, with a small closet on its north side, the back stairs on its south side, and a doorway to what is now a bedroom over the kitchen on its east side. Architectural evidence indicates that this passageway was a later alteration: formerly, a doorway in the west wall of the east bedroom opened directly onto the back stairs, and as noted above, the closet seems to have been partitioned off from an adjoining bathroom. These alterations argue that originally, there was no direct access at the second floor level between the main house and the service wing. The back stairs, which currently provide the only vertical access to all levels of the house between the basement and the attic, would have been the only means of reaching the room over the kitchen, which may originally have been a servants' bedroom or work space. (A laundry chute door is located within the back stairs between the first and second floors). Presently this room functions as a bedroom, with its own dressing room and bathroom. The bedroom features a bay window with leaded glass casements in its south wall and an 8/1 window in its east wall. The dressing room (over the back porch) opens from the northeast corner of the bedroom and features floor-to-ceiling closets with mirrored doors and an 8/1 window in its east elevation. At the west end of the dressing room is a bathroom (over the butler's pantry), with tile walls and floor, original porcelain tub and modern sink and toilet; the bathroom has an 8/1 window in its north wall.

At the top of the back stairs, the attic level contains seven rooms of varying sizes, as well as several closets. These may have originally been servants' rooms (although there is no

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evidence of bathrooms in the attic) or storage rooms. The ceilings slope sharply and have complex angles resulting from the hipped roofs and multiple dormers. All of the dormer windows are metal replacement 1/1 sash.

A full basement runs beneath both the main house and the service wing. All walls are unfinished granite. Room partitions of brick follow a layout similar to the first floor level. The room underneath the kitchen may have been the original laundry room: a laundry chute in the back stairs ends in a small closet there. Other basement rooms were used for storage, heating plant, and similar functions.

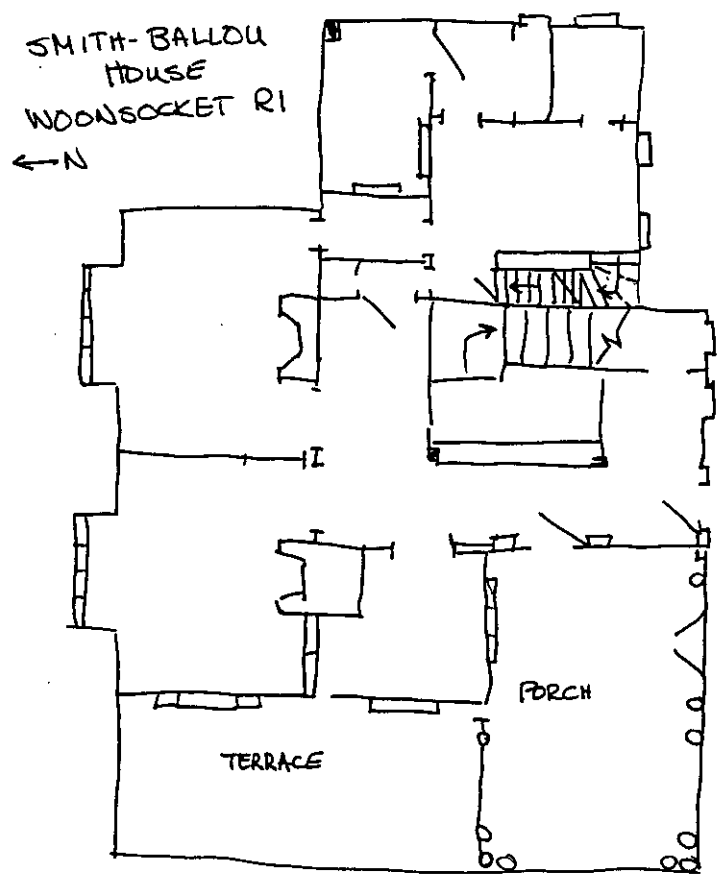
The alterations that the Farnells made to the house during their forty-year residency (1913-1953) are consistent in character with the original 1906 Smith-Ballou House and have gained significance in their own right. The few later alterations do not detract from the house's historic or architectural significance. The Smith-Ballou House clearly still possesses enough integrity to merit listing on the National Register.

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FIRST FLOOR
Not to scale

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Statement of Significance

Built in 1906 for two elderly sisters, Mary Frances (Ballou) Smith and Sarah Jane Ballou, the commodious and beautifully preserved Smith-Ballou House at 641 Harris Avenue presents an eclectic mix of Queen Anne and Arts & Crafts style design influences. Located in northwestern Woonsocket, the house was constructed just prior to the start of an early 20th-century building boom that turned this previously undeveloped area into a tree-shaded, peaceful, suburban enclave within the city for the middle and upper-middle class. Thus, the Smith-Ballou House represents a period of significant change in Woonsocket, and its architecture reflects the evolving aesthetic taste of the era. Although its setting has changed somewhat, the Smith-Ballou House retains integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and meets Criteria A and C for listing on the National Register.

The City of Woonsocket, a municipality of about 8.5 square miles located in northern Rhode Island, is bounded by the Rhode Island towns of Cumberland and North Smithfield, and by the Massachusetts towns of Blackstone and Bellingham. The Blackstone River winds through the city from northwest to southeast. From the mid-18th century until 1867, those parts of Woonsocket lying north and east of the Blackstone River belonged to the Town of Cumberland; the areas south and west of the river belonged to the Town of Smithfield until 1871. By the early 19th century, the Blackstone River's strong current had been harnessed to provide power for industrial production, leading to the development of factories and mills on both sides of the river, and of mill villages around them. Woonsocket was formed from six mill villages, three in Cumberland and three in Smithfield. One of the Cumberland villages was Woonsocket Falls (now downtown Woonsocket); outside of its village center, agricultural lands extended north to the Massachusetts border. The cross-street nearest the Smith-Ballou House, Gaskill Street, takes its name from the family who had established an extensive farm in this area back in the 18th century.¹

In 1831 manufacturer Edward Harris (1801-1872) founded the Harris Woolen Company, which became one of the nation's premier producers of woolen goods and helped to make Woonsocket a major center of America's textile industries, a prominence the city maintained well into the 20th century. Harris was one of Woonsocket's most distinguished citizens: in addition to being a highly successful businessman, he was active in civic affairs and a generous philanthropist. (Harris's gifts to the community included the Harris Block, now City Hall; the Harris Free Library; and land for the city's first high school and for the Oak Hill Cemetery.) He was also one of the city's major landowners: Woonsocket land evidence records contain hundreds of real estate purchases made by Harris himself or the Harris Woolen Company.

¹ The Gaskill Farmhouse (ca. 1800) still stands at 815 Harris Avenue.

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Among these acquisitions was part of the Gaskill Farm, which Harris turned into a vast residential estate.²

Over time, Harris conveyed some lands in the Harris Estate to the Town of Cumberland for the purposes of creating public highways: Harris Avenue was laid out in its present configuration between 1856 and 1860, while Gaskill Street, Prospect Street, and Winter Street had all been constructed by 1870.³ (Harris Avenue, Gaskill Street, Prospect Street, and Winter Street bound the block in which the Smith-Ballou House stands. The section of Gaskill Street between Harris Avenue and Prospect Street was donated to the city by Edward Harris's widow in 1902.) Little residential development would occur in this relatively remote part of Woonsocket, however, for another forty years.

By the time Woonsocket became a city, in 1888, it was one of the major industrial centers of the United States and the commercial hub of northern Rhode Island, with a population of 20,000; between 1890 and 1915 the number of city residents doubled, to 40,000.⁴ "By 1910, "Woonsocket was booming. Its industrial base continued to expand, and service and retail enterprises prospered. Mass transportation was increasing so that Woonsocket's population became much more mobile ... Water and sewerage systems were mainly in place; electricity and gas were expensive, but available."⁵ The population boom generated a building boom: between 1901 and 1906, over 300 building permits were approved in the city; that number doubled between 1907-1910, and increased to nearly 800 permits issued between 1910-1914.⁶ As of 1895, electric streetcar lines ran along the entire length of Harris Avenue, but public utilities did not extend throughout the former Harris Estate for several more decades, which probably slowed the pace of residential development in some areas.⁷ Nonetheless, around the turn of the 20th century a few wealthy trendsetters bought property and built new homes in previously undeveloped northwest Woonsocket.

Edward Harris's heirs had begun to subdivide and sell off pieces of the vast Harris Estate in the late 19th century, and continued to do so for several decades.⁸ In 1891, the Harris Woolen Co.

² Harris's stately mansion, called "Oakley" (ca. 1855), stood at what is now the northeast corner of Harris Avenue and Blackstone Street, overlooking the city; the house is gone, but the granite pillars marking its driveway entrance still stand.

³ Deed Book 7/Pages 380-381; Plat Book 1/Pages 1, 8, and 21; also, city atlas of 1870.

⁴ Fortin et al, pp. 13 and 56.

⁵ Fortin et al, pp. 37-57; quote on p. 46.

⁶ Records of the Board of Aldermen and City Council of Woonsocket, 1901-1914.

⁷ Research discovered no street atlases or Sanborn Insurance Co. maps for the period 1896-1955, to better define the patterns and pace of housing construction on the former Harris Estate.

⁸ What is now the North End Historic District, bounded by Harris Avenue, Winter Street, Prospect Street, and Blackstone and Spring Streets, was developed as a suburb-within-the-city 1910-1930.

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sold to the Jenckesville Mills Co. a 36.5 acre parcel of vacant land bounded by Harris Avenue, Gaskill Street, Prospect Street, and Winter Street.⁹ (The Jenckesville Mills Co. president, Oscar Rathbun, was married to Edward Harris's daughter Rachel; the Rathbuns lived at 289 Prospect Street.¹⁰) The 1895 city atlas shows only one structure in this entire area, on Winter Street near the corner of Harris Avenue.¹¹ The Jenckesville Mills Co. apparently had no plans for industrial expansion on this land, as it divested itself of this property over the next few years.

According to city tax records, in 1903 Stanley G. Smith (1867-1909), president of the Guerin Spinning Company and an officer of several other textile companies, built himself a house on Harris Avenue south of Gaskill Street (603 Harris Avenue), on a hill overlooking the city. Three years later, Stanley Smith's widowed mother, Mary F. Smith, and his aunt Sarah Jane Ballou (Mary's sister) relocated from their shared home on Earle Street to live in a brand new house built next door at 641 Harris Avenue. In addition to their personal connection to Stanley Smith, other factors might have encouraged these ladies – both in their late 60s at the time -- to move away from the neighborhood where they had lived for decades. By the turn of the 20th century, the suburban ideal of a freestanding home in peaceful, natural surroundings had taken firm root in the American popular imagination. The physical and spiritual benefits ostensibly provided by suburban living appealed particularly to residents of industrialized urban areas, where the price for economic prosperity was often a host of societal ills including overcrowding, noise, pollution, crime, vice, and disease. Mary Smith and Sarah Ballou were apparently quite comfortable financially, either in their own right or because they were supported by the well-to-do Stanley Smith. Thus they were in a position to build a new house in an up-and-coming neighborhood that was quiet, safe, and healthful. Accordingly, in 1905 and 1906, Mary F. Smith and Sarah J. Ballou jointly bought from the Jenckesville Mills Co. two large parcels of land totaling about 216,000 square feet (five acres), lying south of Gaskill Street and east of Harris Avenue.¹²

Mary Frances Ballou Smith (1837-1908) and Sarah Jane Ballou (1839-1913) were two of the four children of the Hon. Latimer Whipple Ballou (1812-1900), who served three consecutive terms (1874-1880) in the U.S. Congress. Ballou had moved his young family from Cambridge, Mass. to Woonsocket in 1842, and daughters Mary and Sarah spent the rest of their lives in the city. Mary married William H.S. Smith in 1861, but was widowed in 1869; Sarah never married. Both sisters lived with their father at 33 Earle Street for many years (he died in 1900; the house still stands, now 83 Earle Street), and after moving to Harris Avenue, continued to live together until Mary's death in 1908; Sarah died in 1913. In their obituaries, both sisters were described in nearly identical language as women of cheerful disposition and admirable character, who had

⁹ Deed Book 57, Page 169; also 1895 city atlas.

¹⁰ Chase, p. 23.

¹¹ Charles E. Ballou House (no relation), 43 Winter Street, ca. 1879, still standing.

¹² Deed Book 72, Pages 25 and 173.

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lived useful and well-spent lives and were highly regarded in the community; Sarah Ballou particularly was cited for her generous financial contributions to charitable causes. Unfortunately, their names do not appear in any published histories of Woonsocket, so little else is known about them.

The house at 641 Harris Avenue appears to have been constructed in 1906, although it was not given that street address until 1911. While no building permit was found for this house,¹³ the 1907 city directory places Mrs. Mary F. Smith as a resident of "Harris Avenue near Gaskill Street." (The 1907 directory gives another home address for Mary, 33 Earle Street, which was also the address for Sarah J. Ballou that year.) Mary's 1908 obituary indicates that her sister Sarah J. Ballou lived with her on Harris Avenue; Sarah is not listed in city directories at all in 1908 or 1909, but in 1910 she is listed as living on Harris Avenue near Gaskill Street. The 1911 directory lists Sarah J. Ballou's address as 641 Harris Avenue, and her 1913 obituary notes that she died at her home at 641 Harris Avenue.

The city tax records also support the theory that the house was constructed in 1906, as the assessed value of this property increased substantially in 1907. The 1906 tax records list Sarah "R." Ballou as the owner of real estate on Gaskill Street valued at \$7,700 (the initial "R" appears to be a typographical error. The 1906 tax book does not list Mrs. Mary F. Smith as an owner of property on either Gaskill Street or Harris Avenue.) In 1907, the combined value of real estate on Gaskill Street held by Sarah J. Ballou and Mrs. Mary F. Smith was \$18,200, confirming that a substantial building had been erected on the property the previous year.

When Mary F. Smith died in October 1908, she left a half interest in her real estate to her son, Stanley G. Smith. (The other half interest went to her nephew, M. Louis B. Sweatt, who lived nearby on Woodland Road.) In early 1909, Stanley Smith sold his interest in a 103,668 sq. ft. lot south of Gaskill Street to his aunt, Sarah Ballou (who owned the other half of that property). The deed specifically references buildings and improvements on this lot, likely referring to 641 Harris Avenue.

All of these records appear to confirm that Mary F. Smith and Sarah J. Ballou built 641 Harris Avenue in 1906; that Mary lived there until her death in 1908; and that Sarah lived there from

¹³ Woonsocket building permits before the 1940s are not available, but the minutes of the meetings of the Board of Aldermen and City Council record the approval of building permit applications. Nowhere in those records for the years 1901-1914 do the names Mary F. Smith or Sarah J. Ballou (or Stanley G. Smith) appear. A permit might have been issued in the (unknown) name of an architect or builder, but in the period 1901-1907 only two building permits were approved for Harris Avenue and one for Gaskill Street; none of these appears to apply to 641 Harris Avenue. Given the house's size, prominent setting, and architectural quality, it seems implausible that the sisters failed to obtain a building permit for its construction, but apparently they did not.

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either 1908 or 1910 until her own death in 1913. The physical siting of 641 Harris Avenue also reinforces the theory that Mary Smith and Sarah Ballou were close to the family of their son and nephew Stanley G. Smith: the two buildings stand near each other and have similar setbacks, exterior materials, and design elements.

Given the Smith-Ballou House's high level of design quality and construction, the sisters must have hired an architect, although his or her name has not been discovered.¹⁴ Housing design at the turn of the 20th century was eclectic, informed by a variety of sources, and it was quite common for architect-designed houses to exhibit a mix of styles and influences, freely adapted to suit both architect and client. In this case, the architect's design inspiration came from both the Queen Anne and Arts & Crafts styles prevalent during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The house's balloon frame, irregular floor plan (especially the arrangement of the main entrance hall and stairway), asymmetrical massing, changes in vertical plane, variable exterior wall surfaces, bay windows, and diverse exterior materials and textures all show the influence of the Queen Anne style. However, its interior finishes – faux ceiling beams, heavy dark wood trim, stained and leaded glass, massive mantelpieces, cabinetry, and light fixtures – strongly manifest an Arts & Crafts aesthetic, which also extended to the house's outdoor living spaces. (Porches, sunrooms, terraces and numerous large windows were also means of connecting to nature, as required by the suburban ideal.) Both styles were introduced across the United States by architectural magazines. *The American Architect and Building News*, the country's first architectural journal, began publishing Queen Anne designs by about 1880, and the style remained popular until about 1910.¹⁵ Meanwhile, Gustav Stickley's *The Craftsman*, published from 1901-1916, brought the Arts & Crafts movement to America.¹⁶

In a city like Woonsocket, whose fortunes had been made from industrial production, it not surprising that the Arts & Crafts aesthetic would hold some appeal. The Arts & Crafts movement began in England in the 1850s as a reaction to the badly designed, cheaply built, mass-produced products of the Industrial Age. Its leading British proponents, Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin, John Ruskin, and William Morris, argued that "the Industrial Revolution had dehumanized the artisan, turning him into a machine, robbing him of his creativity, and leading to buildings, artifacts, and decorative objects that were ugly because they had no soul."¹⁷ The

¹⁴ Sarah J. Ballou was a prominent enough figure in Woonsocket that after her death, the local newspaper published an article about the disposition of her estate, in which her home on Harris Avenue was described as "palatial" (*Woonsocket Evening Call*, 8/27/1913, p. 10). Therefore, at some time between 1906 and 1913 the paper may also have published a piece about the house itself that perhaps would mention the architect's name. However, since back issues of the paper have never been indexed, seven years' worth of daily editions would need to be researched to find any such article.

¹⁵ McAlester, p. 268.

¹⁶ Tinniswood, p. 78.

¹⁷ Tinniswood, p. 12.

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Arts & Crafts movement placed a moral imperative on good design: artistic inspiration plus high quality craftsmanship yielded honest, beautiful, and therefore morally valid and socially beneficial products. This link between creativity and morality held powerful appeal for those who were dismayed by the social ills of industrialized society: a dismay which also lay at the root of the trend toward suburbanization. The suburban home symbolized a physically and spiritually healthful living environment; the Arts & Crafts movement aimed to produce such an environment through artistic beauty, natural materials, and honest construction. Whether or not the Ballou sisters were swayed by, or even aware of, the philosophical implications of the Arts & Crafts style, both it and Queen Anne were popular choices for luxury suburban homes in the early 20th century.

Upon Sarah J. Ballou's death in August 1913, her nephew M. Louis B. Sweatt inherited one third of his aunt's estate, including the house at 641 Harris Avenue. Between October and December 1913, Mr. Sweatt sold both the house and its five acres of land to Alonzo Farnell, a manager at the Woonsocket Worsted Company.¹⁸ The Farnells would later be responsible for developing part of this property as a suburban-style subdivision.

Alonzo Farnell (1860-1939) and his wife Lena G. Farnell (1867-1960) both immigrated to the United States from Bradford, England, Alonzo in 1880 and Lena by 1886. Alonzo had followed his parents to Philadelphia, where his father Edwin Farnell worked in the worsted wool spinning business; the family soon relocated to Lawrence, Mass. (where Alonzo married Lena) and then to Woonsocket. Upon their arrival in 1886, Alonzo and Edwin Farnell, along with Edwin Wilcox and William R. Cordingly of Boston, purchased the Enterprise Mill complex on River Street, just west of the Blackstone River and north of Blackstone Street. The partners remodeled the Enterprise Mills "into a first class mill for the spinning of worsted yarns by the Bradford process," named the Woonsocket Worsted Mills, with Edwin Farnell as president and Alonzo Farnell as agent and general manager.¹⁹ The Woonsocket Worsted Mills ran profitably for decades under the Farnells' leadership, and even expanded its operations regionally, despite competition from mills employing alternative "French process" sorting and spinning techniques, which came to dominate Woonsocket's worsted wool industry after the turn of the 20th century. Woonsocket Worsted was noted in a 1907 souvenir booklet promoting Woonsocket as one of the leading industrial corporations in town, and by 1915 the company employed 350 people.²⁰

After Edwin Farnell's death in 1915, Alonzo Farnell ascended to the presidency of the Woonsocket Worsted Mills, which was reorganized as the Woonsocket Worsted Company in 1938. At that time, the company employed some 575 people. (Alonzo's son Edwin A. Farnell

¹⁸ Deed Book 93/Pages 436 and 542.

¹⁹ Edwin Farnell obituary, 2/22/1915.

²⁰ Burgess, p. 5; E. Farnell obituary.

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succeeded him in that role until the company closed its Woonsocket plant in 1952 and relocated its operations to South Carolina.) When Alonzo died in 1939, the *Woonsocket Call* ran his obituary on page one, noting that he was "for more than half a century a well known resident of this city."²¹ Curiously, this prominent figure's name does not appear in published histories of Woonsocket, and the Woonsocket Worsted Mills/Company merits only infrequent mention despite being a major local employer and long-term successful family business.

When Alonzo and Lena Farnell first moved to Woonsocket in 1886, city directories indicate that they lived with his parents and raised their three children at 112 Blackstone Street; in 1905, they moved to 74 Highland Street, where they remained until they purchased the Smith-Ballou House in 1913. Like all the family's previous residences, 641 Harris Avenue was just minutes away from the Woonsocket Worsted Mills complex at 784 River Street. Alonzo and Lena Farnell lived together in the Smith-Ballou House for 25 years, until his death; she continued living there until 1953.

During the time of the Farnells' residency at 641 Harris Avenue, automobiles became prevalent in Woonsocket, and the city's population continued to climb (to 49,000 in 1930) despite an economic downturn following World War I and the devastating impact of the Great Depression on the city's industrial base.²² The growth of automobile use and the increasing population in Woonsocket both influenced the future development of the Farnell's property.

Records of the Board of Aldermen and City Council of Woonsocket indicate that on August 10, 1914 Alonzo Farnell was granted a building permit for construction of a stone building on property on Gaskill Street. Given previous documentary evidence cited that the house was built in 1906, it does not appear that this building permit refers to the main house itself. Furthermore, whatever Mr. Farnell intended to build, it does not appear that he carried out those plans immediately: tax records for 1913-1918 do not indicate a substantial change in the assessed value of the property. But between 1918 and 1920, the assessed value of the house increased from \$13,500 to \$16,100, and by 1922 increased again to \$20,900.²³ This total gain of \$7,400 in assessed value over four years can almost certainly be explained by the construction of the screened porch and enclosed sunroom at the southwest corner of the house, as well as to the one-story stucco-clad freestanding garage east of the house near Gaskill Court.²⁴ Two

²¹ Alonzo Farnell obituary, 11/6/39.

²² Fortin et al, pp. 82 and 97.

²³ Tax books for 1919 and 1921 were not available either at Woonsocket City Hall or the Woonsocket Free Library.

²⁴ The 1922 tax book also indicates that the Farnells owned an 36,000 additional square feet of land in three separate parcels off Gaskill Street; one of these parcels, 12,364 sq.ft. in area, was assessed for a building worth \$3,250. However, deeds indicate that in 1919 the Farnells purchased some property from

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driveways, one from Harris Avenue and one from Gaskill Court, both reaching the south entrance of the house, appear on a 1936 site plan for a neighboring property.²⁵

In July 1938 the Farnells recorded a development plat called "Sunset Terrace" on the street edges of their property.²⁶ The Sunset Terrace Plat contained 12 house lots: seven along Gaskill Street and five along Harris Avenue, each with at least 60 feet of frontage and a depth of 150-180 feet and ranging in area from 9,000 to 12,000 square feet. Each of these lots was sold off within a year (eight of them in a single day: July 13, 1938), all with deed restrictions limiting any new construction to single-family housing, at a minimum cost of \$5,000, set back at least 50 feet from the street, height 1-1/2 to 2-1/2 stories, with a 1-car or 2-car garage. The Sunset Terrace Plat, although quite small, is consistent with the concept of the automobile suburb of the 1920s and 1930s: substantial lots (with room for driveways and garages) for free-standing, single-family homes surrounded by landscaped yards, each buffered from its neighbor and from the street, engendering a sense of peace, refuge, good health, clean living, and being close to nature. (The plat also allowed the Farnells to protect their own property by controlling who would become their neighbors, and what those neighbors would build.) The Farnells retained for themselves an L-shaped parcel south and east of the Sunset Terrace Plat, containing their home and approximately 2 acres of land, with frontage on Gaskill Street. Over time, the development of the Sunset Terrace Plat, the sale of four additional lots on Gaskill Street, and the growth of trees on the Farnell's remaining property made the Smith-Ballou House completely invisible from either Harris Avenue or Gaskill Street.

After Alonzo Farnell's death at home in November 1939, Lena Farnell resided at 641 Harris Avenue for another 13 years. In 1940, she created a right-of-way 10 feet wide extending southward from Gaskill Street approximately 204 feet through the eastern end of her property, ending at her house lot's southern boundary (apparently this right-of-way had traditionally provided access from Gaskill Street). This right-of-way is now known as Gaskill Court. Mrs. Farnell later sold off four lots, two on each side of the right-of-way, all with easements making the right-of-way available to all future abutting property owners.²⁷

Edward H. Rathbun; that property was located on the south side of Gaskill Street east of the Farnell's land, therefore the \$3,250 building was not the Farnell's garage.

²⁵ Elodie Guerin to Arthur A. Pomfret and Hylda Norma Pomfret, July 1936, Plat Book 10, Page 55.

²⁶ Plat Book 10, Page 57.

²⁷ These four lots today are Lot 255 (141 Gaskill Street), Lot 256 (139 Gaskill Street), Lot 161 (159 Gaskill Street) and Lot 70 (173 Gaskill Street). Lots 161 and 70 were sold in 1940 and 1951, respectively; title were not performed on Lots 255 and 256, but the 1956 city directory indicates that houses were standing on all four lots by that year. Note that 141 and 173 Gaskill Street actually face onto Gaskill Court: neither has frontage on Gaskill Street itself.

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**SMITH-BALLOU HOUSE, 641 HARRIS AVENUE
WOONSOCKET, PROVIDENCE CO., R.I.**

In February 1953, Mrs. Farnell (now residing in Belmont, Mass.) sold 641 Harris Avenue and its remaining 103,120 sq. ft. of land to Alain and Constance Lareau of North Smithfield. The Lareaus never lived in the Smith-Ballou House, so they apparently bought the Farnell property as an investment. The Lareaus subdivided this property into two smaller lots and sold each separately. In May 1953 Emilien and Fabiola Chicoine bought the house on a lot of approximately 36,313 sq.ft. (known as Assessor's Plat 12, Lot 254). The deed also included the right-of-way easement on Gaskill Court; an open space easement (approximately 40 feet deep) to run in perpetuity on the property directly to the west; and utility easements for gas, water, and sewer pipes connected to public mains on Gaskill Street and Harris Avenue. Those easements all continue to run with the property today. Emilien and Fabiola Chicoine lived at 641 Harris Avenue for the next decade; in June 1963 George H. and Gertrude C. Poirier bought the house, and lived in it for 15 years. In 1978, the Poiriers sold the property to Claude A. Chicoine and Madeleine M. Chicoine of Uxbridge, Mass; they divorced in 1986, but she continued to live at 641 Harris Avenue until 2002, when she sold the house to its current owners, Dr. Stuart Gitlow and Dr. Heather Abrahams-Gitlow. The Gitlows also purchased two adjacent undeveloped, heavily wooded lots totaling about 45,000 sq.ft., west of the house lot, that had been part of the original Smith-Ballou estate from 1906-1913 and part of the Farnell estate from 1913-1953.

Today the Smith-Ballou House property consists of the 1906 house, the ca. 1920 garage, and approximately 2 acres of land on three lots.²⁸ Although its original 5 acre-lot has been reduced, the house still has considerable open space adjacent to it (especially to the west) and is surrounded by mature trees and plantings which help to screen it from its neighbors to the south and west. The house itself is a nearly intact example of a luxury suburban home of the period 1880-1930; alterations made after the Farnells' residency ended in 1953 have no architectural significance on their own and have had no negative impact on the overall integrity of the house. The property thus retains most of its original setting, and strong integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and therefore meets Criteria A and C for listing on the National Register.

²⁸ Woonsocket's tax assessor renumbered the city's plats and lots in 2001. The three lots now owned by the Gitlows are Lots 12-254, 12-113 and 12-148 on Tax Map B-2.

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Atlas of Rhode Island: Town of Woonsocket. Philadelphia: D.G. Beers & Co., 1870.

[Note: no atlases or Sanborn Insurance Co. maps of Woonsocket are available for the period 1896-1955.]

The Woonsocket Call and Evening Reporter

Tuesday, October 20, 1908, p. 8: "Obituary Notice: Mrs. Mary F. Smith."

Friday, August 22, 1913, p. 2: "Obituary Notice: Miss Sarah J. Ballou."

Monday, August 25, 1913, p. 8: "Many Attend Obsequies: Nephews are Bearers at Funeral of Miss Sarah J. Ballou."

Wednesday, August 27, 1914, p. 10: "M.L.B. Sweatt Named As Residuary Legatee [of estate of Sarah J. Ballou]."

Tuesday, September 2, 1913, p. 9 and Tuesday, September 9, 1913, p. 8: "Probate Notices" [Estate of Sarah Jane Ballou, to be Probated Sept. 16, 1913]."

Monday, February 22, 1915: "Obituary Notice: Edwin Farnell."

Monday, November 6, 1939, p. 1: "Alonzo Farnell Dies At Home in 80th Year."

Saturday, February 23, 1963: "Emilien Chicoine Sr. Dies; City Liquor Store Founder."

Woonsocket City Directories, 1899-1996

Woonsocket Land Evidence Records, 1847-2002:

[Note: Records are copied from the Town of Cumberland 1847-1871.]

Woonsocket Records of the Board of Aldermen and City Council, 1897-1914.

Woonsocket Tax Books, 1900-1925.

Woonsocket Tax Map B-2, 2001.

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**SMITH-BALLOU HOUSE, 641 HARRIS AVENUE
WOONSOCKET, PROVIDENCE CO., R.I.**

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property includes all of the present lots #12-254, #12-113 and #12-148 as shown on Sheet B-2 of the Assessor's Plats of the City of Woonsocket (updated 2001).

Boundary Justification

The nominated property contains all that remains of the land area originally associated with the construction of the Smith-Ballou House in 1907: i.e., approximately two of the five acres of land purchased in 1905 by the house's first owner-occupants. (The other three acres were subdivided by subsequent owners in 1938 and sold to others.)

List of Photographs

All photographs were shot on August 30, 2002 by Kathryn J. Cavanaugh. Original negatives are on file at the R.I. Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission

- 1 of 9: Exterior of house, east and north elevations, looking southwest.
- 2 of 9: Exterior of garage, east and north elevations, looking southwest (house is west of garage).
- 3 of 9: Exterior of house, north and west elevations, looking southeast.
- 4 of 9: Exterior of house, south elevation, looking northwest.
- 5 of 9: Interior of house, 1st floor, main entrance hall, looking south.
- 6 of 9: Interior of house, 1st floor (northwest corner), living room, north wall, looking northwest.
- 7 of 9: Interior of house, 1st floor, living room, fireplace in south wall, looking southeast.
- 8 of 9: Interior of house, 1st floor (northeast corner), dining room, north and east walls, looking northeast.
- 9 of 9: Interior of house, 1st floor, dining room, fireplace in south wall, looking southwest.



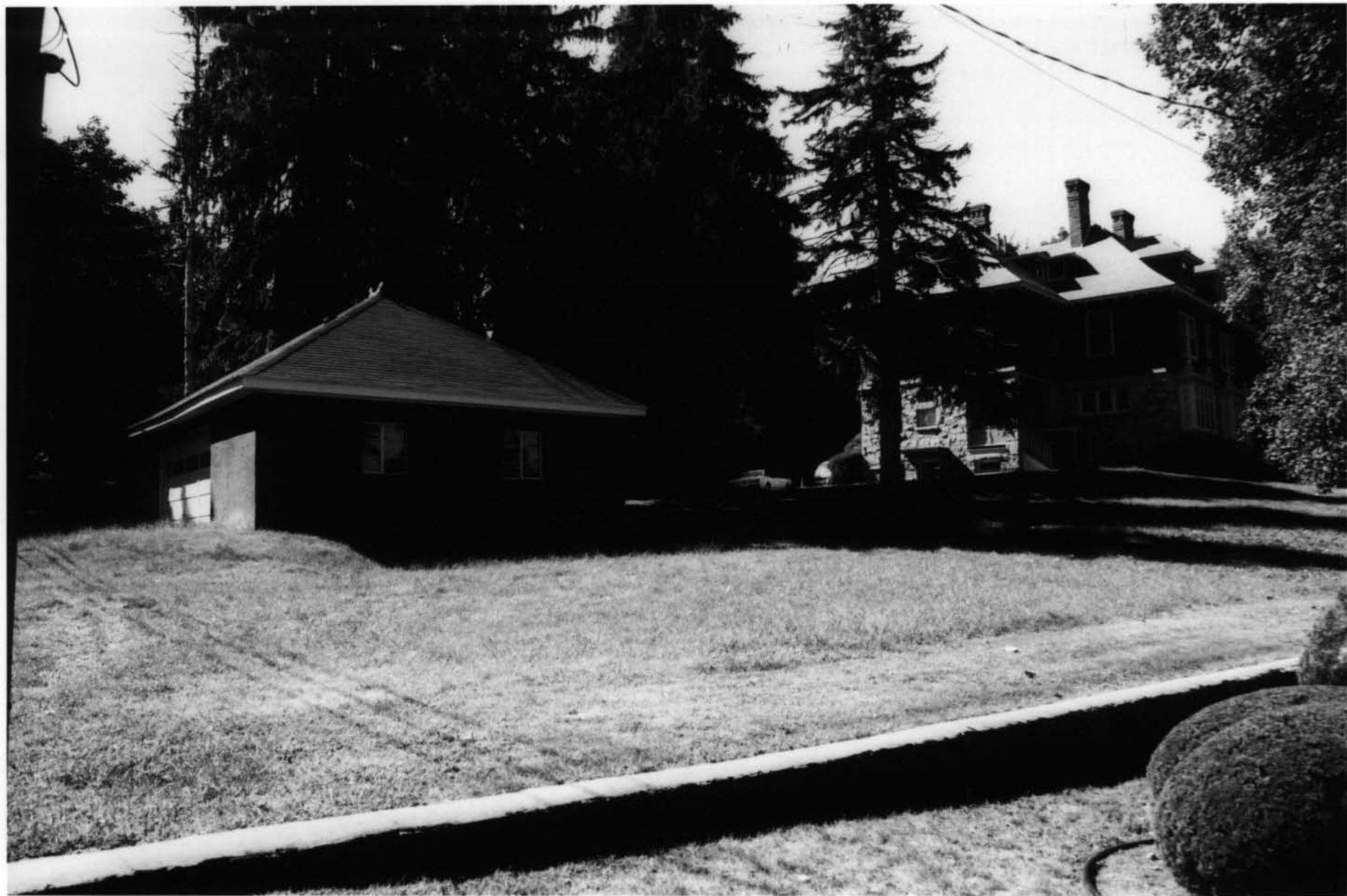
SMITH-BALLOU HOUSE

641 HARRIS AVENUE, WOODSOCKET, PROVIDENCE CO, RI

PHOTO 1 OF 9

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SMITH BAKER HOUSE

641 HARRIS AVE, WOODSOCKET, PROVIDENCE CO, RI

PHOTO # 2 OF 9

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SMITH-BALLUW HOUSE

641 HARRIS AVE, WOONISOCKET, PROVIDENCE CO, RI

PHOTO # 3 of 9

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SMITH-BALLOU HOUSE

641 HARRIS AVE, WOODSOCKET, PROVIDENCE CO, RI

PHOTO #4 OF 9

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SMITH-BALLOU HOUSE

641 HARRIS AVE, WOODSOCKET, PROVIDENCE CO, RI

PHOTO # 5 OF 9

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SMITH-BALLOU HOUSE

641 HARRIS AVE, WANSCKET, PROVIDENCE CO,
RI

PHOTO # 6 OF 9



SMITH - BALLON HOUSE

641 HARRIS AVE, WOODSOCKET, PROVIDENCE CO, RI

PHOTO # 7 of 9

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STITH-BALDWIN HOUSE

6 HARRIS AVE, WOODSOCKET, PROVIDENCE CO,
RI

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SMITH-BALLOU HOUSE

6-11 HARRIS AVE, WOODSOCKET, PROVIDENCE CO, RI

Photo # 9 of 9