

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

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

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

HISTORIC

Isaac Bowen House

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Maple Valley Road at R. I. Route 102

CITY, TOWN

Coventry

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

No. 2, Hon. Edward Beard

STATE

Rhode Island

CODE

44

COUNTY

Kent

CODE

005

**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 *private offices*
**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Audubon Society of Rhode Island

STREET &amp; NUMBER

40 Bowen Street

CITY, TOWN

Providence

VICINITY OF

STATE

Rhode Island

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Coventry Town Hall

STREET &amp; NUMBER

75 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Coventry

STATE

Rhode Island

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

determined eligible

Historic and Architectural Resources of Coventry, Rhode Island

DATE

February 1978

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

CITY, TOWN

Providence

Rhode Island

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

- EXCELLENT
- GOOD
- FAIR
- DETERIORATED
- RUINS
- UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

- UNALTERED
- ALTERED

## CHECK ONE

- ORIGINAL SITE
- MOVED
- DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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

Built in 1795, the Isaac Bowen House is one of the finest surviving testimonies to Rhode Island vernacular architecture of the late eighteenth century in Coventry. Sheltered by woodlands and fields, it enjoys a peaceful setting on an 83-acre wooded lot facing south on Maple Valley Road at its junction with the Victory Highway (Route 102). The property is protected to the north and east, where it is bounded by the 250-acre Parker Woodland, preserved and maintained by the Audubon Society of Rhode Island.

The main block of the house is a two-and-a-half-story, gable-roof, center-chimney, timber-frame structure sheathed with clapboards; its facade is articulated into five bays. A mid-eighteenth-century ell is attached at the northeast corner. Its most distinctive exterior ornamentation is the six-panel entrance door, framed by fluted Ionic pilasters which support a raised pediment with dentils surrounding a semicircular fanlight topped with central keystone. Windows possess simple surrounds and are capped--except under the eaves cornice--with splayed lintels; windows on the front and rear of the second story abut the eaves, and the cornice is mitered out around their frames. All windows were originally twelve-over-twelve or nine-over-nine--on the rear elevation and at attic level--sash, but these have been replaced by six-over-six sash on the front and sides of the house. The fieldstone foundation of the main house is broken by basement windows on the sides and a wooden bulkhead at the northwest corner.

The interior of the main block carries the basic five-room-plan on both principal floors (See sketch plan). The entrance hall and front stairs are tightly incorporated into the narrow area in front of the center chimney. The stairs are more graceful than many found in other houses of the same period and locale: the string is open, an acorn pendant ornaments the bottom of the top run, and a rising molding directly beneath the treads is delicately articulated with a double row of vertical grooving. Paneling along the stairwall is not original, but added during restoration.

On either side of the front hall are two parlors. The southeast room has its original mantel, which is almost identical to that in the nearby William Waterman House: the face beneath the mantel shelf is articulated by three short, fluted pilasters, dividing it into two panels with raised moldings that form inner rectangles. The mantel in the southwest parlor has been restored to its original appearance. It retains the form of earlier eighteenth-century examples with a paneled, full-height chimney breast and floating mantel shelf, but it reflects an incipient Federal influence in its delicate moldings. Attenuated, fluted, floor-to-ceiling pilasters flank the firebox. The original hearth, made of glazed English tiles, remains. Floorboards are original in this room. The cornice molding uses the same vertical grooving found along the stairway and in the southeast parlor mantel.

See continuation sheet 1

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CONTINUATION SHEET 1

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

There are four rooms across the back (see sketch plan): a small room leading off the southwest parlor, its eastern wall flanking a rear stairway; a narrow room at the rear corner of the house; a central keeping room; and a small chamber--now a bathroom--at the northeast corner. The west wall of the keeping room has three doors, providing access to the cellar, the rear stairs, and the northwest corner room. Two eight-panel doors flank the large cooking fireplace on the south wall of the keeping room; this cooking fireplace augments that in the rear kitchen ell and that in the second-floor keeping room directly above.

The plan of the second floor duplicates that of the first. The presence of full cooking facilities and more-elaborate-than-usual woodwork in the southwest chamber suggests that the house could have been used by two families, perhaps different branches of the Bowen family.

The main portion of the house is predated by an ell at its northeast corner, believed to have been built around 1755. There are two exterior doors on the east and west sides of the ell. Divided into two rooms, the ell consists of a large keeping room to the south and a smaller pantry to the north. An ample sleeping loft, reached by a ladder near the fireplace, is above. The ceilings in the ell are low, with hand-hewn beams and girts exposed. Window openings are small and filled with nine-over-nine sash.

There are four principal outbuildings, all in good condition, with wall coverings of weathered shingles and white trim. The shed/garage, oriented east-west paralleling the main house and just behind a wooden well structure, is currently used as a woodshed. A small outhouse stands to the east of this structure. The shed is a more recent building than the spacious L-shape barn and shed behind, which are both of pegged, handhewn post-and-beam construction. The Isaac Bowen House was once part of a functioning farm, and the barn could very well be original to the house. It has undergone minor alterations throughout the years as need dictated, but it too is well maintained.

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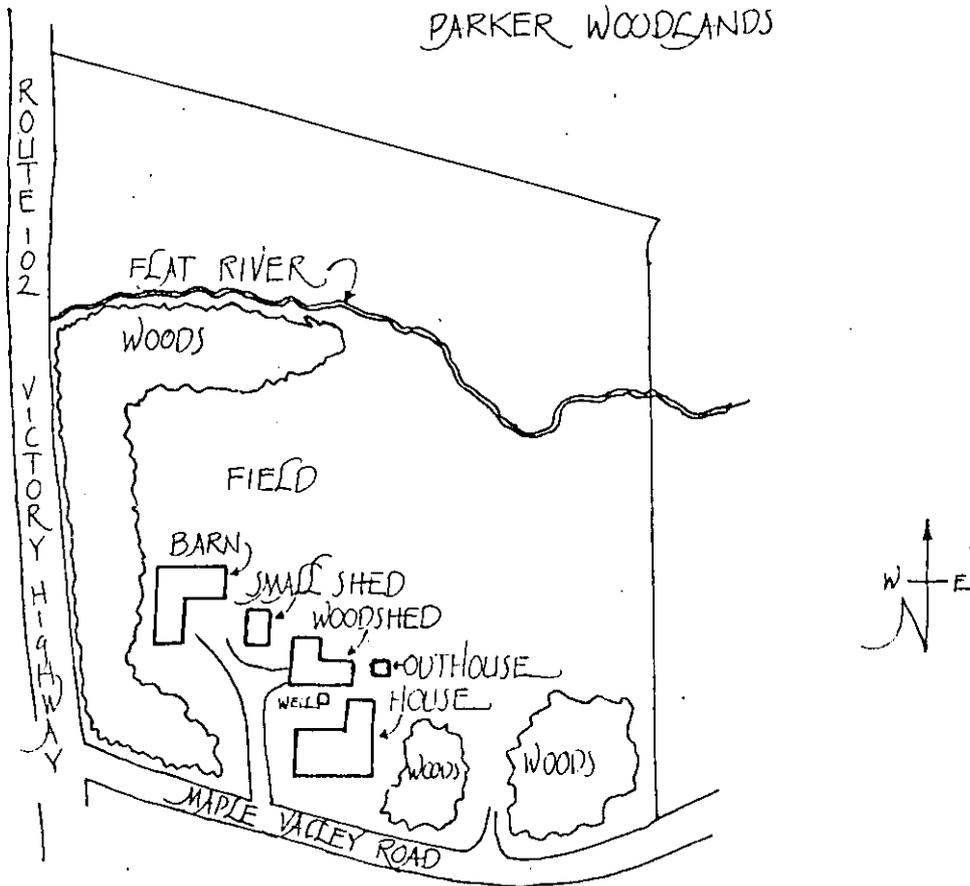
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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET 2

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ISAAC BOWEN HOUSE & FARM  
COVENTRY, RHODE. ISLAND  
SKETCH SITE PLAN -- NOT TO SCALE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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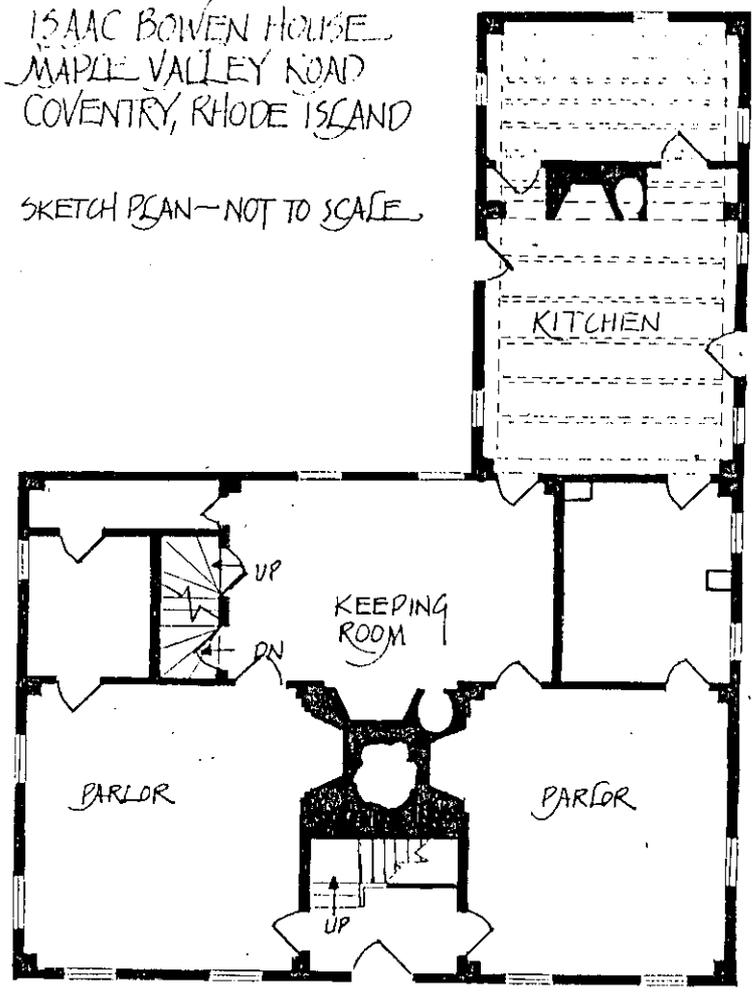
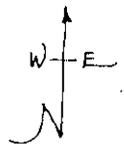
CONTINUATION SHEET 3

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PAGE 4

ISAAC BOWEN HOUSE  
MAPLE VALLEY ROAD  
COVENTRY, RHODE ISLAND

SKETCH PLAN - NOT TO SCALE



# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL HUMANITARIAN	
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES ca 1755, 1795

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Isaac Bowen House is a noteworthy local landmark both for its fine architectural qualities and for its association with one of the most prominent eighteenth-century families in Coventry. Because of its location shortly east of Bowen's and Waterman's Hills and on the western fringe of the former settlement of Potterville (formerly Whaley's Hollow), the property is additionally significant for its connection with the development of the town.

One of the many houses built by the Bowens, this dwelling is the only survivor. Rescued from eventual deterioration by the late owner and his foster son, the Bowen Homestead has been restored. A particularly handsome version of a late eighteenth-century, two-and-a-half-story, gable-roof farmhouse with central chimney, it is further distinguished by its handsome detailing, which is sophisticated for a farm dwelling in a remote town. Because the Bowens were well-educated and leaders in town government, they were no doubt more aware of up-to-date architectural trends. The house is appropriate for a gentleman farmer. Details such as the carved rosettes on the exterior doorway; the parlor's elegant, full-height mantelpiece; glazed English tiles on the hearth; and use of open string and relatively delicate moldings in the stairway are all more elegant than those found in the typical farmhouse of the day.

The presence of a second-floor keeping room with cooking fireplace sheds further light on the use this house and others of its type. Though it remains undocumented that the house was intended for two families, the two original cooking fireplaces strongly suggest that is the case. Ongoing study reveals that more of these eighteenth-century houses were shared by two families--perhaps two branches of the same family--than was previously believed.

The long rectangular ell at the rear of the house, built in the 1750s, is significant itself. It is a well-preserved example of a mid-eighteenth-century, rural, one-and-a-half-room cottage, with rough-hewn beams and posts left exposed, and a sleeping loft above. It was probably built by a member of the Bowen family on land that was part of the original Bowen purchase of 1743.

The several late eighteenth-century and early nineteenth-century out-buildings behind the house--all in good condition--form a small farm complex typical of the area and period. The buildings, arranged in a cluster behind the house, with the fields beyond recall the agricultural activity that occurred in the property's earliest years.

See continuation sheet 4

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The farmstead remained in continuous Bowen ownership for over 150 years. Isaac G. Bowen, for whom the house is named, purchased the property in 1834 from his father, Nathan. Nathan Bowen, the son of Israel, inherited the property in 1807; at that time, he was already living in the house. Nathan's grandfather, Aaron, was the first member of the Bowen family to settle in Coventry. Arriving in 1754, he purchased 204 acres of dense woodland surrounding and including the hill which still bears the family name. His seven children grew up to be notable and prominent citizens of Coventry: Israel, Aaron II, and Ichabod were prominent in the field of education, and Israel was instrumental in establishing the first library in the town. In 1812, a schoolhouse was built on Bowen's Hill, one of the first in Coventry. Aaron's son-in-law Caleb Vaughn was one of the incorporators of Coventry in 1741. After the town's incorporation, Aaron II was elected a town councilman, and the Bowen Hill area became one of the four principal town centers. Because of its proximity to the Pike, the major highway to Connecticut, this section of Coventry was especially active, and town meetings were held in the nearby Waterman Tavern until the Town Hall was completed in 1835.

The Bowen population was once quite dense in this part of Coventry, and the Bowen family played host to George Washington on at least one occasion, when he stayed the night in a Bowen house directly across the road from the Isaac Bowen House. This house, like all the other Bowen family dwellings, has disappeared, and only the Isaac Bowen House remains.

Few eighteenth-century houses today retain such an expansive, intact, natural setting little encroached upon by later development. The surrounding Parker Woodlands, owned and maintained by the Audubon Society, have protected the Bowen House, and the House's devolution to the Society will further ensure its preservation. Its situation only emphasizes the Isaac Bowen House's significance to architectural and social history which merits its inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

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CONTINUATION SHEET 5

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PAGE 2

Town of Coventry, Rhode Island. Land Records. Deed Books 4, 7, 8, 10, 20, 35, 51, 55.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Colé, J.R. History of Washington and Kent Counties. New York. 1889

Harpin, Mathias P. Prophets in the Wilderness: A History of Coventry, Rhode Island, Oneco, Connecticut: Harpin's Connecticut Almanac. 1974.

History of Coventry. Western Rhode Island Civic Historical Society Proceedings. Volume I, Number 1, April, 1948. (See Continuation Sheet 5.)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 83.5 acres

QUADRANGLE NAME Coventry Center, Rhode Island

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 19 275 810 46 22190

B 19 275 790 46 21550

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 19 275 300 46 21630

D 19 275 320 46 22280

E                        

F                        

G                        

H                        

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Town of Coventry, Rhode Island, Tax Assessor's Plat 46, Lot 1, inclusive.

## 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

Wendy A. Ketchum, William McKenzie Woodward

ORGANIZATION

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

DATE

October 1978

STREET & NUMBER

150 Benefit Street

TELEPHONE

401-277-2678

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 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE May 14, 1980

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION



Isaac Bowen House  
Coventry, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger  
Date: October 1978  
Negative: Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission

View of the exterior from the southwest.

Photo #1



Isaac Bowen House  
Coventry, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger  
Date: October 1978  
Negative: Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission

Front door detail.

Photo #2



Isaac Bowen House  
Coventry, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger  
Date: October, 1978  
Negative: Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission

View of exterior from the west.

Photo #3



Isaac Bowen House  
Coventry, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger  
Date: October 1978  
Negative: Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission

Southwest parlor, first floor

Photo # 4



Isaac Bowen House  
Coventry, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger  
Date: October 1978  
Negative: Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission

Kitchen ell, interior view from the  
south

Photo # 5



Isaac Bowen House  
Coventry, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger  
Date: October 1978  
Negative: Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission

View of outbuildings from south

Photo # 6

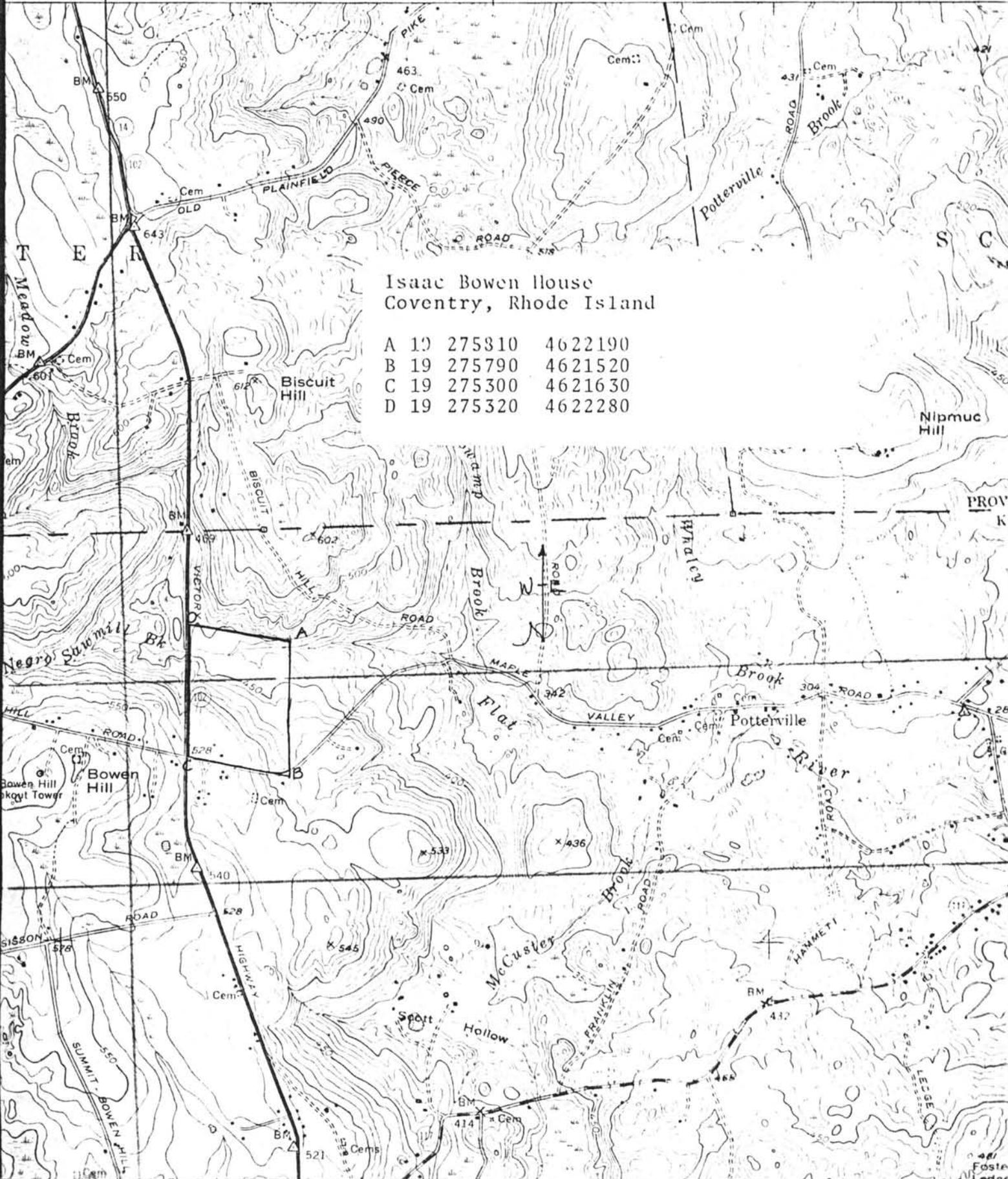


Isaac Bowen House  
Coventry, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger  
Date: October 1978  
Negative: Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission

View of Barn from South

Photo # 7.



Isaac Bowen House  
Coventry, Rhode Island

A	19	275310	4622190
B	19	275790	4621520
C	19	275300	4621630
D	19	275320	4622280

PROV  
KI

481  
Foster  
Ledge