

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

| | |
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**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

Thomas H. Hughes House

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

423 Central Avenue

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Johnston

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2 - Rep. Edward Beard

STATE

Rhode Island 02919

___ VICINITY OF
CODE

44

COUNTY

Providence

CODE

007

3 CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | PRESENT USE |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE | PUBLIC ACQUISITION | ACCESSIBLE | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: |

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mr. and Mrs. George Testa

STREET & NUMBER

423 Central Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Johnston

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

Rhode Island 02919

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Johnston Town Hall

STREET & NUMBER

1385 Hartford Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Johnston

STATE

Rhode Island

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Preliminary Survey Report: Johnston

DATE

1976

___ FEDERAL STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

R.I. Historical Preservation Commission

CITY, TOWN

150 Benefit Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Thomas Hughes House is located on an upward-sloping residential section of Central Avenue (once the Central Pike) in the village of Hughesdale in Johnston, Rhode Island. Though not large or pretentious, the house has the good proportions and simple dignity of the Greek Revival style.

The timber-framed structure is one-and-a-half stories; the ridge of its gable roof runs east and west. The house sits on a basement of rough stonework faced on the exterior with smooth granite. The southern entrance facade is five bays wide and the main portion of the house is three bays deep. The original wall cover of clapboards is now concealed by shingles, but the exterior trim (corner pilasters, window frames, and a frieze beneath the eaves) is still visible.

There are two interior chimneys which are visible above the ridge of the roof; their fieldstone bases are seen in the basement.

At the western end of the house is a one-story gabled extension (its ridge also east-west) three bays wide and set back one bay from the entrance elevation. This kitchen wing does not appear to be a later addition. In the southwest corner of this ell is a third chimney (now reduced in its above-roof proportions) which serves the kitchen hearth and ovens and has a storage area behind. A summer kitchen, a later addition, extends north from the ell; it has a slightly lower gable roof. At the north end of the summer kitchen a shallow shed-roofed area, probably for wood storage, is attached.

The house lacks its original nearly-square front entry porch, which was supported by two (probably Doric) columns; the marks of their bases can be seen on the granite entrance steps.

The main entrance, flanked by sidelights, has a handsomely panelled door which opens into a central hall. The east half of the hall is taken up by a staircase which rises in one straight run to the second floor; the stair rail has plain, round, tapered newels with bun-on-block tops and slim oblong balusters, all of dark-stained wood.

To right and left, doors open to a parlor on each side of the house; each of these rooms is two bays in width and depth; both have a fireplace on the north wall. Behind the hall and parlors are a northeast room of square shape and a longer central chamber, with a cupboard opening under the stairs. The northwest corner of the house contains back stairs to the second floor and basement, a rear entrance door, a small store room (now a lavatory), and a passageway from the kitchen ell to the rear chambers.

(See continuation Sheet #1)

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The second floor contains an L-shaped hall at the top of the main stairs onto which open two large and two smaller rooms (one of which has been converted into a bathroom). There is a large cupboard under the eaves.

Interior trim on the first floor is sparse but it has a robust classical dignity. Window and door frames in the principal rooms and hall have side pieces, each with a wide vertical groove, which makes them resemble pilasters; they support flat frieze boards capped by simple but pronounced moldings. First floor doors have six inset, bevelled, raised panels and are equipped with knobs. Windows on both floors retain their six-over-six sash. The mantels on the two front rooms have plain and sturdy Doric pilasters supporting the frieze board and shelf. Recent restoration work suggests that they may have originally been marbleized in black with rust-colored veining. On the second floor the trim is economical--windows and doors have flat board frames; doors have four flat inset panels and have nineteenth century type wrought-iron thumb latches.

The floors throughout the house are of wide boards. There is no wainscot or chair rail; nor are there any ceiling cornices; the walls are plastered. In the kitchen ell, the woodwork surrounding the hearth and ovens has been removed and replaced and the fireplace itself has been rebuilt. The northern wing of the kitchen has been completely gutted to accommodate modern conveniences and a new window has been added.

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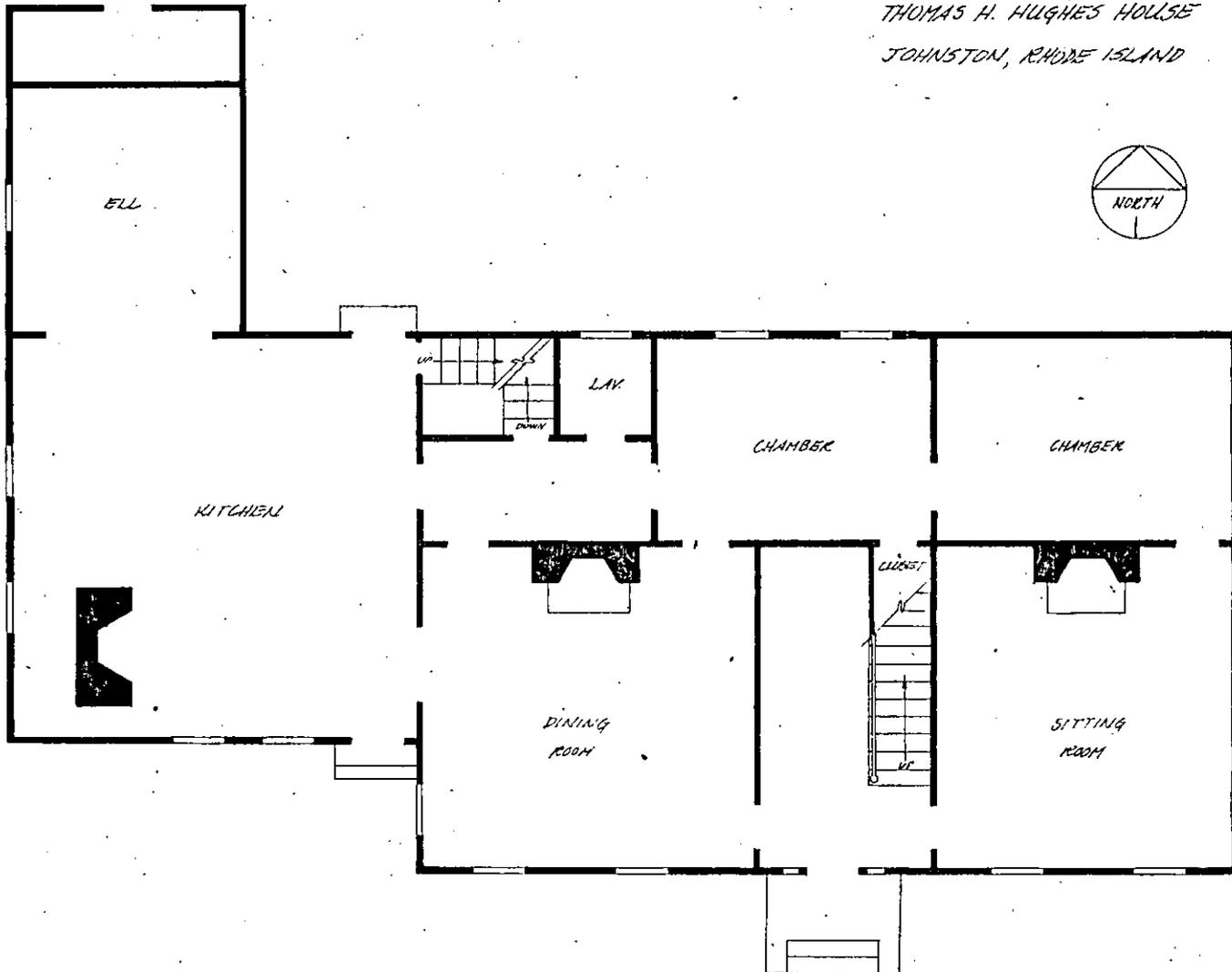
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8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Hughes House is important as the only extant dwelling of Thomas H. Hughes, a locally important manufacturer, and as one of the few remaining elements of what was once a thriving industrial village in Johnston.

Although the primary significance of the Hughes House is not its architectural quality, it has value as a small well-proportioned example of the vernacular Greek Revival style which has suffered relatively few alterations. Much of the vernacular Greek Revival exterior trim remains and on the interior, the original plan, the handsome stair rail, the simple window and door frames, the original floors and hardware, and the wooden mantels of the two front rooms are all intact, making this a modest, pleasing and informative example of its style.

The house was probably built by Zachariah French about 1845, but it derives its primary significance from the tenure of its most noted occupant and owner, Thomas Henry Hughes. Hughes, an Englishman by birth, arrived in the United States in 1839; he spent his first ten years in Rhode Island in the textile manufacturing center of Pawtucket where he worked as a cotton and silk printer and became familiar with several aspects of the textile industry.

In 1849, Hughes (now married to Mary Smith, daughter of Nathan Smith, one of the first block printers in the United States) moved to Johnston. He settled adjacent to the small Dry Brook, a subsidiary of the Pocasset River, and in 1850 began the manufacture of dye stuffs in a mill on the south side of Central Pike. In the early 1840s, Dry Brook had been used by James Simmons for a bleachery, but his water rights and land were purchased by Hughes.

The variety of chemical products produced by the Hughesdale Dye and Chemical Works found a ready market in the expanding textile industry of Rhode Island and supported the growth of the village surrounding the Hughes works. A major flood in 1868 destroyed much of the village, including Hughes' mill, but the factory was soon replaced. While Hughesdale never developed into an extensive manufacturing center, it did a substantial business (\$100,000 in 1871) and employed about sixty men. The small village included a number of mill

(See continuation Sheet #3)

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houses, a church, a school, and a store all ranged along Central Pike. Today, little remains of the village; of the mill plant, only a pair of 1½-story, stuccoed-stone double mill houses remain.

In 1865, Thomas Hughes purchased his small Greek Revival house. As tax records and nineteenth-century maps reveal that this house was the most substantial of the several dwellings which he owned in the 1860s, it seems probable that the founder of the mill and the village lived here, while his other properties housed mill workers. It is likely that he lived here until the late 1870s when a larger house was constructed; the "New house" listed in the 1877 Johnston town records and taxed at \$2000 (while the "Z. French House" and its land were taxed at \$1500). This later house no longer stands and, thus, the small house is now the one most closely associated with Hughes.

Thomas Hughes was the principal citizen of his village until his death in 1884. Though Hughes served as a tax assessor for the town of Johnston, he did not hold other political office and his pre-eminence in his village was largely social and economic. His manufacturing operation was reorganized as a stock company in 1871, but the stock was held mainly within the Hughes family; after Thomas's death, the enterprise was managed by his son Theodore who had been a store-keeper and postmaster at Hughesdale. Theodore Hughes had worked as a factor in the company between 1871 and 1878 and, after that date, was elected treasurer of the company. Unlike his father, Theodore Hughes extended his influence as a mill owner into the political sphere--he served as president of the Johnston town council and was twice elected to the state legislature.

At present the village of Hughesdale is a residential area--only a few remnants still exist to remind one of its origins as a nineteenth century industrial village. Of these few, only the Hughes House is directly associated with the founder of the village. As a well-preserved house associated with a locally-important industrialist, the Hughes house deserves the recognition and protection of the National Register.

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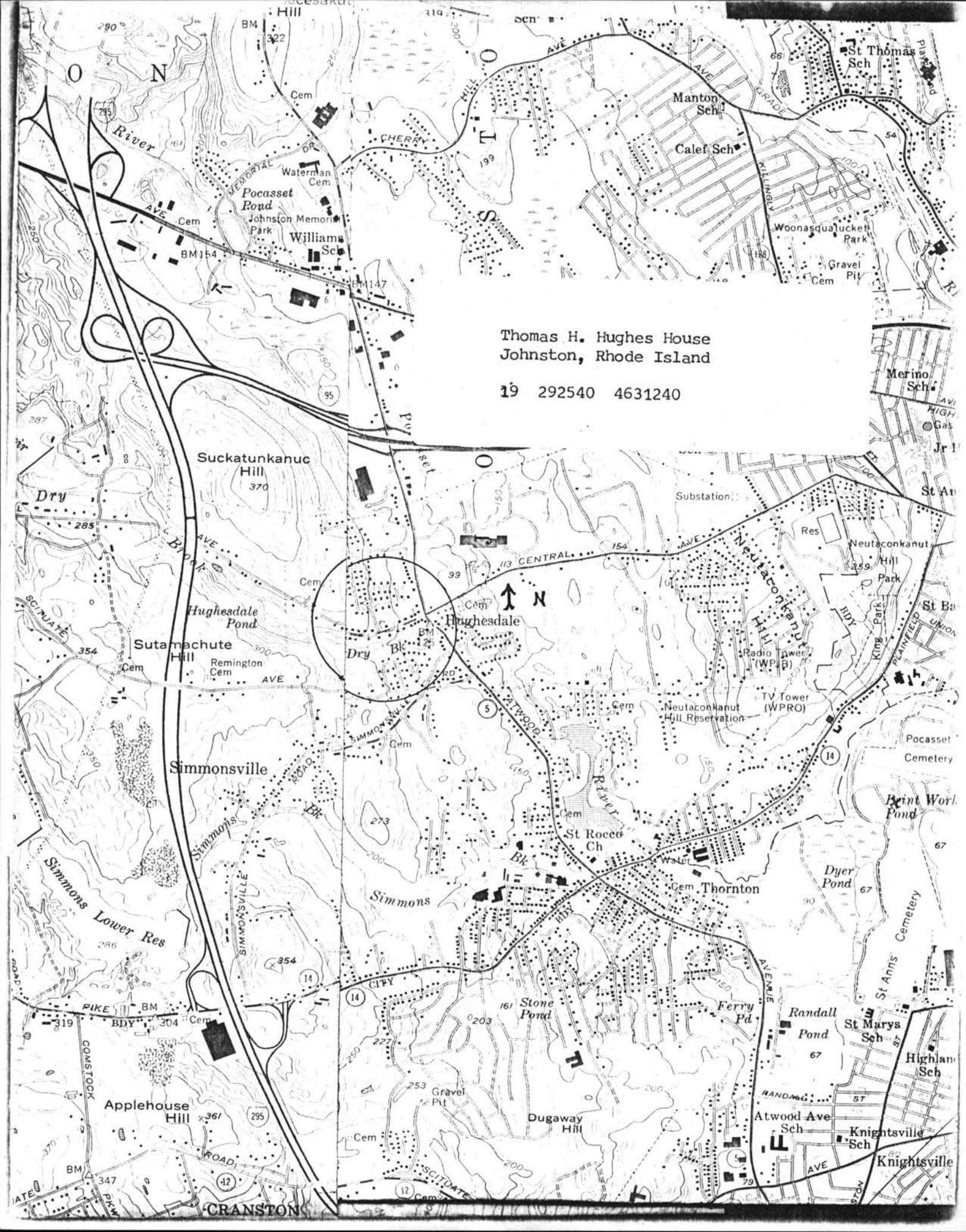
2

Representative Men and Old Families of Rhode Island,
Chicago: J. H. Beers and Company, 1908.
History of the State of Rhode Island, Philadelphia:
Hoag, Wade & Company, 1878.









Thomas H. Hughes House
Johnston, Rhode Island

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