

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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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

Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm

AND/OR COMMON

Lakeside Farm

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

559 Union Street

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Portsmouth

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Rhode Island

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF  
CODE

44

1 Hon. Fernand J. St. Germain

COUNTY

Newport

CODE

095

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

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

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mr. Herbert Hall

STREET &amp; NUMBER

559 Union Street

CITY, TOWN

Portsmouth

STATE

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

Rhode Island 20871

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

Portsmouth Town Clerk

STREET &amp; NUMBER

East Main Road

CITY, TOWN

Portsmouth

STATE

Rhode Island 20871

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

I-895 Corridor Survey

DATE

1977

\_\_\_ FEDERAL  STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

CITY, TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island

**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

Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm, one of the finest and most complete early farmsteads remaining in Rhode Island, includes house, nine outbuildings, and forty acres of land, approximately its original acreage. Sited on the crest of a gentle hill which rises near the middle of Aquidneck Island between East Main and West Main Roads in Portsmouth, the farm straddles Union Street; the complex of house and outbuildings, however, is all north of the road (see site plan).

The immediate surroundings of the farm complex remain primarily open; many of the fields are still worked and beyond the present owner's property bounds lie Lawton Valley Reservoir to the north and St. Mary's Lake and Sisson Pond to the south. All three bodies of water were built, apparently, as part of the Newport Water Works, starting in the 1880s. St. Mary's Lake in particular gives the farm a tranquil and expansive vista southward. Despite the open land immediately surrounding the farm buildings, there are an increasing number of twentieth century intrusions in the middle distance, including several contemporary ranch houses and a golf course. Portsmouth, like other formerly rural towns in Rhode Island, is succumbing to development pressures.

The Lawton-Almy-Hall farmhouse, built in two main sections, one dating from the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century and the other, from about 1800, is set at the rear of a generous, tree-shaded dooryard facing south. The dooryard and practically all the farm acreage are surrounded and internally divided by old and exceptionally handsome dry-laid, level-topped walls of slim, smooth, horizontal slabs of native stone.

The earliest (rear) part of the house is set on a north-south axis, has a gambrel roof covering two and a half stories, and is of frame construction. It has no cellar, being set instead upon heavy timbers carried by rock piles, as in the earliest part of Newport's Quaker Meeting House, which dates from 1699. It has always been shingled, though this old wall cover is now concealed by composition siding which the owner intends to remove. Surprisingly, its original front was not on the south, facing the carriage or wagon road, but, rather, on the north, where a slightly later (c. 1725) one-story, gable-roofed ell shelters the entrance. This entry is unusual

See Continuation Sheet 1

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

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CONTINUATION SHEET 1

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

because it has a barrel-vaulted plaster ceiling, which is similar to the ceiling in the still-extant Southernmost Schoolhouse, built to serve this neighborhood in 1725.

Internally, the original part of the farmhouse contains, to the south, on its ground floor, a generous keeping room (now used as the kitchen and for family dining), two small east and west chambers (now used as pantries), and a small stairhall between the northern entry and the keeping-room (see floor plan). The stairs lead to four tightly proportioned but adequate bedchambers on the second floor and to a storage garret under the mortised and pinned roof-framing. In this part of the house there is no elaborate finish; door and window surrounds are of plain flat boards and doors are of board and batten construction, still retaining their thumb-latch hardware. Corner posts, now cased in the keeping-room, are evident throughout and on the second floor display gunstock terminations; diagonal bracing timbers are also to be seen on the second floor. Three windows in this section still have their old twelve-over-twelve and six-over-nine paned sash.

The keeping room remains the heart of the older part of the house and has in its southern side a large cooking fireplace with bake-oven beside it, concealed behind a simple panelled door. Above the fireplace and oven runs a mantel shelf supported by heavy, early eighteenth century moulding. The original, and presumably larger, firebox was restyled to its present configuration apparently about mid-century.

Some rooms in the northern part of the house may now be used for different purposes than originally, but there has been no shifting of partitions, no changing of door or window openings. This section has suffered few changes over the passing years and for over a century remained a sufficient, if perhaps increasingly cramped, family dwelling.

About 1800, however, the old-fashioned and small accommodation was increased by a five-bay wide, two-bay-deep extension, set at a right angle to the earlier section and stretching beyond it at each end. This new portion, only one room deep but thirty-eight feet from east to west, gives the building its present "T" shape and more modern, though modest, architectural pretension toward the

See Continuation Sheet 2

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

CONTINUATION SHEET 2

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

street. Its gable roof, with ridge running east to west, is of the same height as the north-south ridge of the older gambrel. The new frontal has simple, and, indeed, still somewhat old-fashioned facade treatment. Windows are, as in the old part, in protruded enframements with plain cappings. The only Federal style gestures apparent are the simplified pilaster and entablature enframement of the central door with its transom and the use of six-over-six-paned window sash.

The southern addition makes use of the large keeping room chimney, using it, in enlarged form, as a central one. The forward part of the house forms, in effect, one half of the familiar five-room central-chimney plan, with the original gambrel-roof structure providing the rear half. Both the location of the chimney on the south side of the earliest part of the house and this interesting joining of two sections around the chimney make the house an unusual one.

The new front section provides a small entry- and stair-hall with two flanking parlors on the first floor and two good-sized bedchambers above. Access to the stone-walled cellar is through a doorway under the stair-landing. The rear wing of the house is reached by several doorways on each floor. On the second floor the floor level in front is two steps higher than that in the old wing.

Interior woodwork in the nineteenth century addition is expectedly more sophisticated than that in the rear wing, but uses several old-fashioned elements which provide interesting contrasts. For example, the walls of the entry hall are treated below the stairs with large, bevelled, raised panels reminiscent of pre-Revolutionary War times; yet the stairway itself, with its moulded, square, bun newel tops, rectangular balusters, and naively sawn scrolls applied along the string course at the end of each step clearly reflects the Federal style, if in a somewhat heavy manner. Doors in this section are four-paneled, in contrast to the primitive plank ones in the rear wing, and there are wainscots of horizontal boarding with capping mouldings. Outstanding features in the section, both downstairs and up, are the sensitively decorated mantels, very fine in several crisp variations of Federal design--paneled pilasters, fret work, protrusions and recessions of the

See Continuation Sheet 3

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED

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

CONTINUATION SHEET

3

ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE

4

shelves, and sharp mouldings. Perhaps a Newport woodworker or shop supplied these special and handsome features of the new rooms, so unlike the old style paneling and heavy detailing of the stairs in the front hall.

For more than 250 years the house has had few changes inside or out, except for the insertion of six-over-six paned window sash in the 1800s; the laying of hardwood floors on top of the original floor boards and the application of new trellised ceilings downstairs in the early twentieth century; and the decidedly inconspicuous placement of electrical and plumbing conveniences, accomplished only within recent decades. The house still lacks central heat.

As always, the house remains the heart of its agricultural acreage. Around it, to the rear and sides, are grouped the nine outbuildings which contribute so significantly to the strong sense of time and place Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm embodies. In 1938, there were twenty-four outbuildings still standing; of these, eight remain today and a modern (1962) garage has been added. Most of the buildings which have since vanished were chicken houses, built by the Almys in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. One was an ice house which, regrettably, was torn down to provide lumber for an unrelated building. Another was the Southernmost School House which was moved to the property in 1863; the school met a happier fate, being given by the Hall family to the Portsmouth Historical Society in 1952 and moved to a location at the east end of Union Street. Of the remaining outbuildings, the cook house, corn crib (now used as a tool shed), part of the cow barn, and possibly part of the horse barn (heavily rebuilt about the turn of the twentieth century) are thought to date back to the Lawtons. The remainder--the wagon shed, chicken house, and cottage for hired help; were built by the Almys.

While the house and outbuildings are of great importance in themselves, the land surrounding them is also significant. Every portion of the acreage is well maintained; enormous old trees are prominent; there are flowers in the dooryard; and the very fine stone walls have already been mentioned. Included also in the farm property, in a southeast corner of these walls, is the old family burying ground, containing Lawtons and Almys, Rhode Island Historical Cemetery, Portsmouth Number 18.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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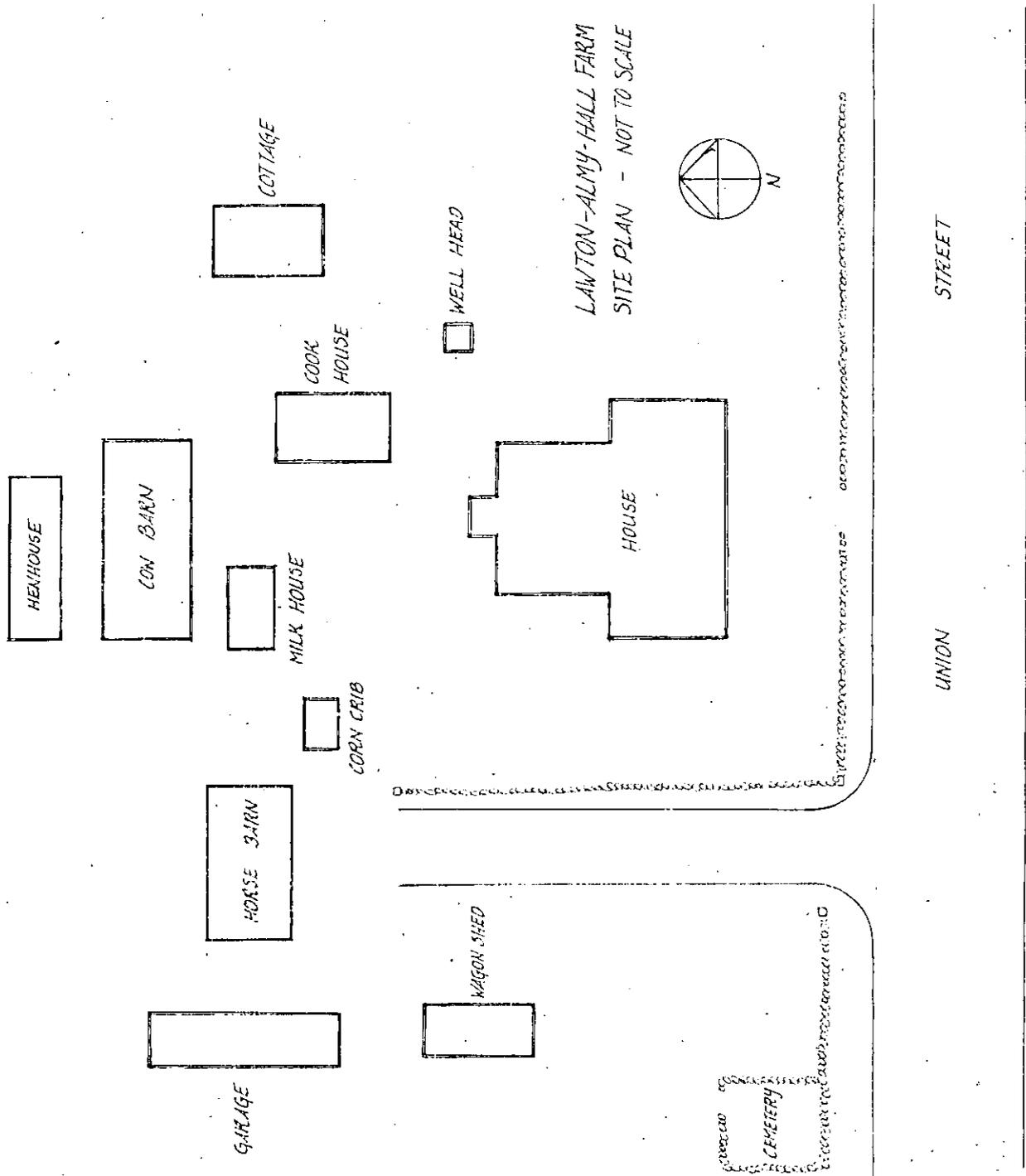
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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET 4

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 5



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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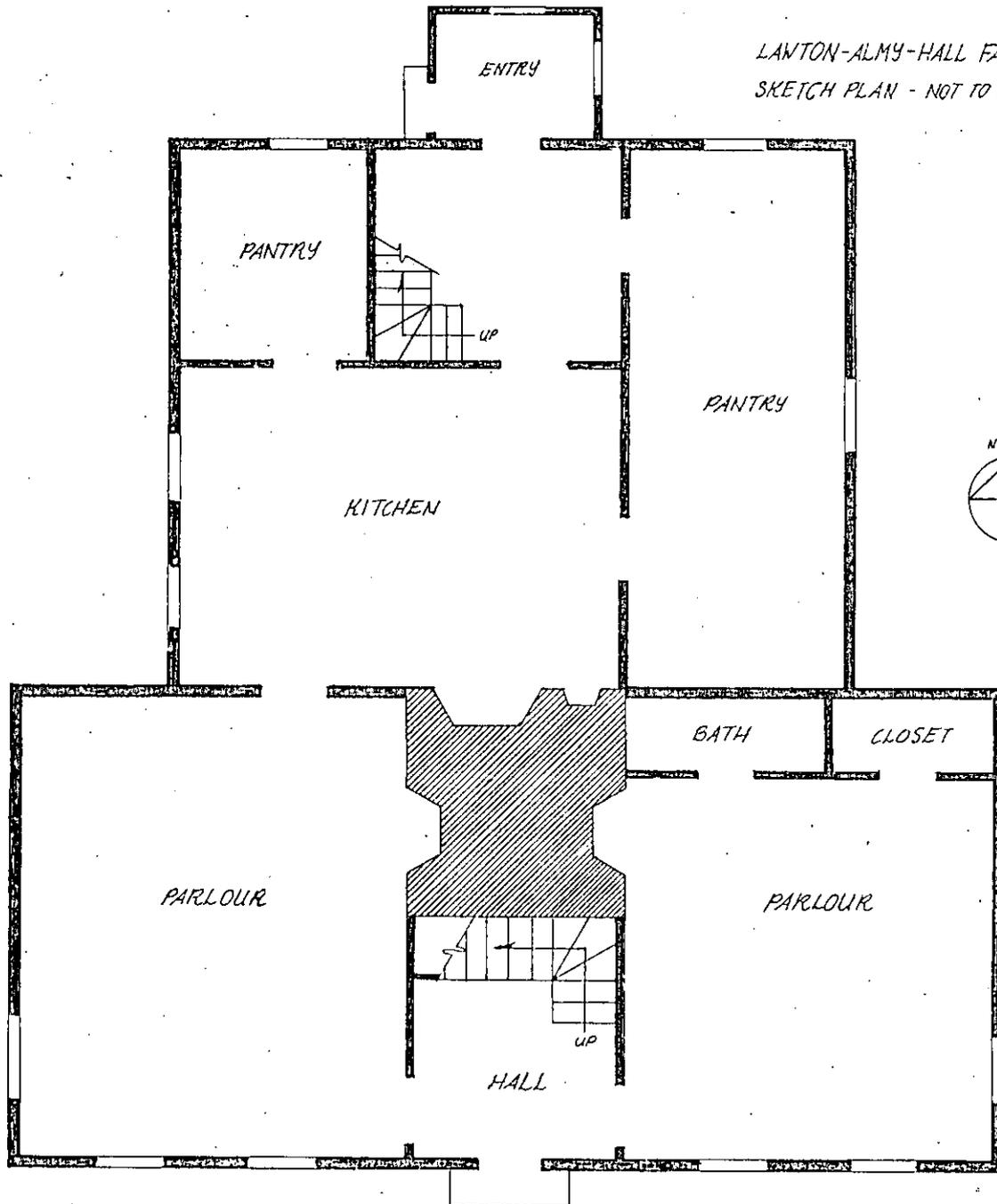
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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET 5

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 6



LANTON-ALMY-HALL FARM  
SKETCH PLAN - NOT TO SCALE

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm is a well-preserved example of the Rhode Island farmstead and is significant to the town of Portsmouth and the state for its visual and architectural character, for its ability to portray to the observer several important aspects of Rhode Island agricultural life in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and for its association with several locally important families.

The farmstead survives in almost complete form; isolated from recent suburban development by its fields, stone walls, and a man-made lake (created from a swamp in 1882-1883 and the source of the property's common name--Lakeside Farm), the Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm is an historic oasis, a placid, rural reminder of Portsmouth's character in preceding centuries.

While several such farmsteads exist in Rhode Island, few retain so much of their land or are as unchanged, still occupied and farmed. Even more remarkable is the survival of so many dependent structures--including wagon shed, corn crib, milk and cook houses, and chicken coop. Such outbuildings, representing the multiple tasks and functions of a farm family, are vital clues for the re-creation of early agricultural life. Only a few Rhode Island farms, such as Casey farm in North Kingstown (now owned by SPNEA and on the National Register) rival the Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm in unity and integrity.

While the farm as a whole is significant, the house itself is also of special interest; even if it stood alone, it would be worthy of study for its structural features, its interesting mating of two parts 100 years apart in age, and its unchanged interior detailing.

The Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm originally included about forty acres and was granted by the town to George Lawton, a captain in the Royal Navy and a member of the Court of Trials, in 1648, only seven years after Portsmouth's land was laid out. Lawton was admitted as a freeman in 1655. Thomas Lawton, George's brother, also owned land nearby, and this ancient Portsmouth family gave their

See Continuation Sheet 4

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET

6

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

name to the entire vicinity, which is still known as Lawton's Valley. George Lawton's son Robert inherited the farm from his father in 1693. His son and grandson were in turn owners of the Lawton property. In 1797, it came into the possession of Elizabeth Lawton Brightman. The Lawton family owned the farm for nearly two hundred years through six generations; they produced meats and a variety of ships' stores, probably for sale in Newport or in Portsmouth's own secondary seaport.

In 1829, Harvey Sullings, a New Bedford merchant, bought the Lawton farm. He held the property for only three years; in 1832 Peleg Almy purchased the land which was then owned by his descendants until 1938 when the last Almy heirs left the property to the Hall family who now own it.

Peleg Almy added adjacent properties to the farm until the total acreage had increased to 120 acres. He lived at the farm for twenty years until his death in 1853 at the age of 92. His wife Hannah died that same year at 84, and the farm was left to their son Edward, one of their fifteen children. Edward Almy married three times; one of his wives was the daughter of Harvey Sullings, from whom his father Peleg had purchased the farm. He died in 1883 and was buried in the Lawton graveyard, the last interment there. During the nineteenth century, the land was used for general market gardening, poultry, and dairy produce.

Before his death Edward Almy deeded the western part of the farm to his son Edward, Jr., but on his death the homestead and its core of forty acres were left to his wife Elizabeth and, after her death in 1917, to her sons Williams and Henry. The Almy family were never political leaders in their town, since they were Democrats in staunchly Republican Portsmouth, but William and Henry Almy were noted locally as affluent and exemplary farmers and as leaders in introducing new farming methods; Henry had charge of the dairy and livestock, while William cared for the poultry and produce on the farm. Under the Almy brothers the farm flourished; in 1938, there were twenty-four outbuildings on the property.

With the deaths of the two childless Almy brothers, the farm passed to Herbert Hall, who had grown up in their family since 1905, and it is the Hall family who still own the Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm, raising potatoes and beef cattle.

See Continuation Sheet 5

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET

7

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

3

The Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm is important as still-active and well-tended survival of the increasingly disappearing rural environment and architectural heritage. It is notable for its unbroken occupation and use of the land, its survival as a complete form, and the ability of its fences, fields, and buildings to portray how farm families lived and built.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Beers, J. H. & Co., Representative Men and Old Families of Rhode Island.  
J. H. Beers, Chicago, 1908.
- Hall, Herbert F., III, Handwritten narrative history of farm, contained  
in letter dated May 13, 1976, in files Rhode Island Historical  
Preservation Commission.
- Portsmouth Land Evidence, Volume 1.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 40

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,9	3,1,0	2,6,0	4,6	0,3	4,7,0	B	1,9	3,1,0	6,0,0	4,6	0,3	1,9,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			
C	1,9	3,1,0	2,9,0	4,6	0,2	8,0,0	D	1,9	3,0,9	9,2,0	4,6	0,3	3,5,0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This property consists of two rectilinear holdings on the north and south sides of Union Street in Portsmouth, Rhode Island. In the Portsmouth Tax Assessor's records, they are Lots 29 and 37 on Tax Map No. 58.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard B. Harrington, Consultant, and February, 1978

ORGANIZATION Pamela A. Kennedy, Historical Survey Specialist  
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

STREET & NUMBER

Old State House 150 Benefit Street

CITY OR TOWN

Providence

TELEPHONE

STATE

Rhode Island

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE X

LOCAL     

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE March 31, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm / "Lakeside Farm",  
Portsmouth, Rhode Island

Warren Jagger, Photographer  
February, 1977  
Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation  
Commission

View of the farm complex from the southwest.

Photo 1



Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm / "Lakeside Farm"  
Portsmouth, Rhode Island

Warren Jagger, Photographer  
February, 1977  
Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation  
Commission

View of the house from the northwest, showing  
early section of house and rear gable-roofed  
entry.

Photo 2



Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm / "Lakeside Farm"  
Portsmouth, Rhode Island

Warren Jagger, Photographer      February, 1977  
Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation  
Commission

Vaulted ceiling of rear entry, looking north.

Photo 3



Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm / "Lakeside Farm"  
Portsmouth, Rhode Island

Warren Jagger, Photographer February, 1977  
Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation  
Commission

Kitchen or keeping room fireplace, looking south.

Photo 4



Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm / "Lakeside Farm"  
Portsmouth, Rhode Island

Warren Jagger, Photographer February, 1977  
Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation  
Commission

Front staircase, looking northwest.

Photo 5

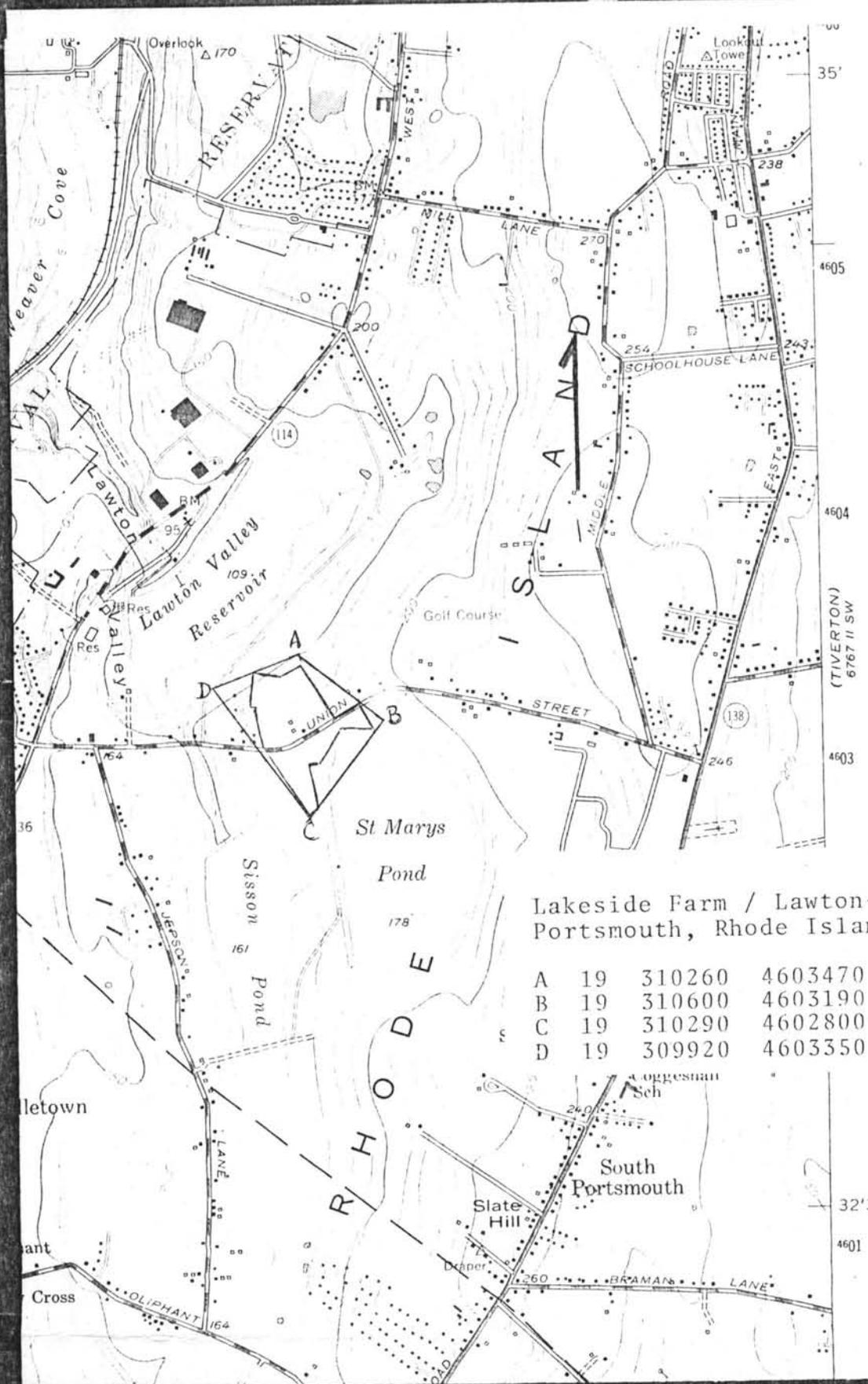


Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm / "Lakeside Farm"  
Portsmouth, Rhode Island

Warren Jagger, Photographer    February, 1977  
Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation  
Commission

Mantel in the front east parlor, looking north-  
west.

Photo 6



Lakeside Farm / Lawton-Almy-Hall Farm  
 Portsmouth, Rhode Island

A	19	310260	4603470
B	19	310600	4603190
C	19	310290	4602800
D	19	309920	4603350

35'  
 4605  
 4604  
 4603  
 (TIVERTON)  
 6767 II SW  
 32'30"  
 4601