UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

NAME

HISTORIC  Jeremiah Dexter House

AND/OR COMMON

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER  957 North Main Street

CITY, TOWN  Providence

STATE  Rhode Island

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY  BUILDING(S)

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC  PRIVATE  BOTH

STATUS

X OCCUPIED  UNOCCUPIED  WORK IN PROGRESS

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE  COMMERCIAL  EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE  ENTERTAINMENT  RELIGIOUS

PUBLIC ACQUISITION  GOVERNMENT  INDUSTRIAL

ACCESSIBLE  SCIENTIFIC  TRANSPORTATION

PRIVATE RESIDENCE  IN PROCESS  BEING CONSIDERED

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME  John B. Nevin Estate

STREET & NUMBER  Mr. John Gorham, Attorney  58 Weybosset Street

CITY, TOWN  Providence

STATE  Rhode Island

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  Providence City Hall

STREET & NUMBER  Dorrance and Washington Streets

CITY, TOWN  Providence

STATE  Rhode Island

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  HABS

DATE  1937, 1955

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN  Washington

STATE  D. C.
The Jeremiah Dexter House at 957 North Main Street is a rectangular, one-and-a-half story gambrel-roof structure built on a typical eighteenth century central chimney, five-room plan. It was measured and photographed for the Historic American Buildings Survey circa 1940.

Built in 1754 by Jeremiah Dexter, and one of the few remaining houses once typical of Providence farm building, the structure is of timber frame construction, set on a rough stone foundation, and was originally entirely clapboarded, although the ends are now shingled. The remaining clapboards are shiplapped and graduated in width, the wider boards toward the top. On the front a molded eaves cornice breaks forward to form the window and door caps; drawings show that originally at least some end windows also had molded caps.

The six-panel front door, which retains its original wrought-iron strap hinges and latch, is set in a plain enframement and has a five-paned transom above. There are two windows at the left of the doorway, and one on the right. The narrow window frames are original. All originally had nine-over-nine sash, but the lower sashes now have single panes. The corners of the house are finished with beaded corner boards. The large central chimney is square in shape, and the top is articulated. A low cellar extends under all of the original structure. About 1850 a two-room one-story gable-roofed ell was added in the rear, the central room on the rear was expanded slightly with a bay, and a lean-to was added to the kitchen on the south. The roof of the house and ell is now covered with modern asphalt tiles.

Originally there were barns and other yard buildings, including a well and corncrib set in a spacious farm yard. Many of these buildings and the grounds survived the onslaught of city development until the end of the nineteenth century, with the corncrib extant into the 1940's. The HABS measured drawing of the corncrib shows that it had vertical plank walls, slanting outward, and a gable roof, and was set on large stones placed at the corners. Only the well remains today, set behind or east of the house within a small wooden gable-roofed enclosure. The remaining grounds, now reduced to approximately 5,000 square feet, are paved over for a parking lot and bounded by a picket fence. The area is zoned commercial, and the house faces west onto North Main Street, a heavily travelled thoroughfare.

The interior has retained most of its original features and paneling, although some of these have been covered over with modern wall sheathing which can be removed. Drawings show that the windows throughout the house originally were finished with molded sills and broad architraves finely molded on both edges. Unfortunately, this window framing has been removed.

(see Continuation Sheet 1)
The original part of the house is divided on the first floor into five rooms with a tiny entry vestibule in front of the central chimney, which serves fireplaces on three sides. The kitchen, or keeping room, located on the southwest side of the house, contains a large splayed fireplace fitted with a crane, with a bake-oven set at the side front. The walls of this room have what is probably the original random-width vertical pine sheathing; the door on the south wall is sheathed on the inside with wide horizontal planks and retains its original wrought-iron strap hinges and latch. As in the rest of the first floor, the ceiling is plastered and the corner-posts are cased.

The northwest room was a parlor and is notable for its fireplace, which has a brick hearth, an iron lintel, and a bolection molding of early unsymmetrical profile around the opening, and an overmantel composed of three vertical panels. The middle room on the east side or rear of the house is flanked by a small bedroom on the north and a pantry on the south. It also had a tiled hearth and fireplace with splayed side-walls; the paneling is now concealed behind plywood.

A very narrow front stair leads to the second floor, which was originally divided into four rooms with plain sheathed walls, and exposed beams. The northern room here contains a brick fireplace that is slightly splayed.
The Jeremiah Dexter house is architecturally significant as an example of early Providence farmhouses; it is historically significant as the only survival of an early Providence farm settlement and because in 1782 the French Army under the command of Vicomte de Rochambeau chose the property as the site of their encampment while in the vicinity of Providence. It is now the most notable physical feature remaining in the City that can be linked to the French presence in Providence during the Revolution. Fortunately, the house is almost unaltered, and is thus a rare surviving example of a once common Providence building type.

During the first half of the eighteenth century several members of the Dexter family lived on neighboring farms all of which were part of the estate owned by Jeremiah Dexter's great-grandfather, the Reverend Gregory Dexter, an associate of Roger Williams. The Jeremiah Dexter house was built in 1754 slightly over a mile north of Providence at the foot of Herrendon Lane (today called Rochambeau Avenue) on the Pawtucket Turnpike (North Main Street) which was part of the original Boston to New York highway. A granite milepost which shows the distance to the Providence Court House as "1½M.," still stands on the Dexter lot. Jeremiah Dexter was a farmer and according to tradition a "natural bone setter" who lived on this farm with his family of nine children until his death in 1807. His grandfather, John, lived on a farm just to the north, and his father, Stephen, lived still further north along the turnpike. Only the Jeremiah Dexter house, which has been continuously owned by descendants of Jeremiah Dexter, remains of this original Dexter family settlement. It is still (in 1975) in Dexter family ownership.

The arrival of the French Army in Newport in mid-July of 1780, too late in the season to be of any offensive help to the American Army, necessitated their quartering in Rhode Island during the winter of 1780-1781. The Army left Rhode Island the following June to join General Washington's forces near Yorktown, Virginia, camping enroute on a plain in the southwestern section of Providence. In November of 1782, on the triumphant return march of the French Army from the decisive victory at Yorktown, this campground was again occupied. However, the owner of the site refused to permit the French to cut wood for fuel and barracks, and the following day Rochambeau marched his troops to a new encampment on the Dexter farm.

(See continuation sheet 2)
The Dexter property was ideal for the camp. It was situated on high and well-aired ground and was located close enough to Providence and Pawtucket for the convenience of the commissaries, yet remote enough to create a buffer zone between the troops and the citizens of Providence. Reverend Edwin M. Stone in Our French Allies (1884) described the campground:

The spot selected for the camp was a plateau on the summit of the ridge lying east of "Pawtucket Avenue" (now North Main Street). ...Each side was lined with tents. On the eastern side ...were several ranges of huts... (each) fifteen feet long and twelve feet wide. A large headquarters tent, surmounted by an ornamental urn, was pitched near the western side.

Although it is not so recorded, it is likely the French were offered the hospitality of Dexter's house. They stayed for three weeks, building barracks, parading and resting until word arrived from Boston that the French fleet was prepared to embark the Army. To cover the cost of the wood cut and damage done, Jeremiah Dexter was paid $1,446 in Continental currency, which soon became worthless. On December 4, 1782, the Army decamped, leaving the Dexter farm and Providence.

The French campsite remained a well known site, and in 1865 a survey was made of the camp by Reverend Stone, assisted by Henry Davis. They were able to trace out and clearly define the sites of 313 huts, tents, and fire pits, and a map of their findings was published in Our French Allies. Later in the nineteenth century an effort was made to preserve the site since many of the physical remains of the camp were still visible. Unfortunately, all that came of this was the erection of a commemorative plaque in 1911 on a small lot at the corner of Summit Avenue and Brewster Street several blocks from the Dexter house. Today, the Jeremiah Dexter farmhouse remains the only significant marker of the French campsite.

Historic American Building Survey Inventory, R.I.-5; 9 sheets, 4 photographs; No. 157.


MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA
ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre
UTM REFERENCES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Easting</th>
<th>Northing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1,9</td>
<td>30,032,0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FORM PREPARED BY
NAME / TITLE Mrs. George E. Downing, Chairman
Edward F. Sanderson, Survey Specialist
ORGANIZATION R. I. Historical Preservation Commission
STREET & NUMBER 150 Benefit Street
CITY OR TOWN Providence
STATE Rhode Island

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 89-965), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Title State Historic Preservation Officer
Date April 30, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS

TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

### NAME

HISTORIC Jeremiah Dexter House

AND/OR COMMON

### LOCATION

**STREET & NUMBER**

957 North Main Street

**CITY, TOWN**

Providence

**STATE**

Rhode Island

### CLASSIFICATION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>PRESENT USE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DISTRICT</td>
<td>PUBLIC</td>
<td>X OCCUPIED</td>
<td>AGRICULTURE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BUILDING(S)</td>
<td>PRIVATE</td>
<td>UNOCCUPIED</td>
<td>COMMERCIAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STRUCTURE</td>
<td>BOTH</td>
<td>WORK IN PROGRESS</td>
<td>EDUCATIONAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SITE</td>
<td>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</td>
<td>ACCESSIBLE</td>
<td>ENTERTAINMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBJECT</td>
<td>IN PROCESS</td>
<td>YES: RESTRICTED</td>
<td>GOVERNMENT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BEING CONSIDERED</td>
<td>YES: UNRESTRICTED</td>
<td>SCIENTIFIC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### OWNER OF PROPERTY

**NAME**

John B. Nevin Estate

**STREET & NUMBER**

Mr. John Gorham, Attorney 58 Weybosset Street

**CITY, TOWN**

Providence

**STATE**

Rhode Island

### LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.**

Providence City Hall

**STREET & NUMBER**

Dorrance and Washington Streets

**CITY, TOWN**

Providence

**STATE**

Rhode Island

### REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

**TITLE**

HABS

**DATE**

1937, 1955

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS**

Library of Congress

**CITY, TOWN**

Washington

**STATE**

D. C.
The Jeremiah Dexter House at 957 North Main Street is a rectangular, one-and-a-half story gambrel-roof structure built on a typical eighteenth century central chimney, five-room plan. It was measured and photographed for the Historic American Buildings Survey circa 1940.

Built in 1754 by Jeremiah Dexter, and one of the few remaining houses once typical of Providence farm building, the structure is of timber frame construction, set on a rough stone foundation, and was originally entirely clapboarded, although the ends are now shingled. The remaining clapboards are shiplapped and graduated in width, the wider boards toward the top. On the front a molded eaves cornice breaks forward to form the window and door caps; drawings show that originally at least some end windows also had molded caps.

The six-panel front door, which retains its original wrought-iron strap hinges and latch, is set in a plain enframement and has a five-paned transom above. There are two windows at the left of the doorway, and one on the right. The narrow window frames are original. All originally had nine-over-nine sash, but the lower sashes now have single panes. The corners of the house are finished with beaded corner boards. The large central chimney is square in shape, and the top is articulated. A low cellar extends under all of the original structure. About 1850 a two-room one-story gable-roofed ell was added in the rear, the central room on the rear was expanded slightly with a bay, and a lean-to was added to the kitchen on the south. The roof of the house and ell is now covered with modern asphalt tiles.

Originally there were barns and other yard buildings, including a well and corncrib set in a spacious farm yard. Many of these buildings and the grounds survived the onslaught of city development until the end of the nineteenth century, with the corncrib extant into the 1940's. The HABS measured drawing of the corncrib shows that it had vertical plank walls, slanting outward, and a gable roof, and was set on large stones placed at the corners. Only the well remains today, set behind or east of the house within a small wooden gable-roofed enclosure. The remaining grounds, now reduced to approximately 5,000 square feet, are paved over for a parking lot and bounded by a picket fence. The area is zoned commercial, and the house faces west onto North Main Street, a heavily travelled thoroughfare.

The interior has retained most of its original features and paneling, although some of these have been covered over with modern wall sheathing which can be removed. Drawings show that the windows throughout the house originally were finished with molded sills and broad architraves finely molded on both edges. Unfortunately, this window framing has been removed.

(see Continuation Sheet 1)
The original part of the house is divided on the first floor into five rooms with a tiny entry vestibule in front of the central chimney, which serves fireplaces on three sides. The kitchen, or keeping room, located on the southwest side of the house, contains a large splayed fireplace fitted with a crane, with a bake-oven set at the side front. The walls of this room have what is probably the original random-width vertical pine sheathing; the door on the south wall is sheathed on the inside with wide horizontal planks and retains its original wrought-iron strap hinges and latch. As in the rest of the first floor, the ceiling is plastered and the corner-posts are cased.

The northwest room was a parlor and is notable for its fireplace, which has a brick hearth, an iron lintel, and a bolection molding of early unsymmetrical profile around the opening, and an overmantel composed of three vertical panels. The middle room on the east side or rear of the house is flanked by a small bedroom on the north and a pantry on the south. It also had a tiled hearth and fireplace with splayed side-walls; the paneling is now concealed behind plywood.

A very narrow front stair leads to the second floor, which was originally divided into four rooms with plain sheathed walls, and exposed beams. The northern room here contains a brick fireplace that is slightly splayed.
JEREMIAH DEXTER HOUSE
957 NORTH MAIN STREET
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

SCALE 0.2" = 1'
(Source: HAIS)
The Jeremiah Dexter house is architecturally significant as an example of early Providence farmhouses; it is historically significant as the only survival of an early Providence farm settlement and because in 1782 the French Army under the command of Vicomte de Rochambeau chose the property as the site of their encampment while in the vicinity of Providence. It is now the most notable physical feature remaining in the City that can be linked to the French presence in Providence during the Revolution. Fortunately, the house is almost unaltered, and is thus a rare surviving example of a once common Providence building type.

During the first half of the eighteenth century several members of the Dexter family lived on neighboring farms all of which were part of the estate owned by Jeremiah Dexter's great-grandfather, the Reverend Gregory Dexter, an associate of Roger Williams. The Jeremiah Dexter house was built in 1754 slightly over a mile north of Providence at the foot of Herrendon Lane (today called Rochambeau Avenue) on the Pawtucket Turnpike (North Main Street) which was part of the original Boston to New York highway. A granite milepost which shows the distance to the Providence Court House as "144" still stands on the Dexter lot. Jeremiah Dexter was a farmer and according to tradition a "natural bone setter" who lived on this farm with his family of nine children until his death in 1807. His grandfather, John, lived on a farm just to the north, and his father, Stephen, lived still further north along the turnpike. Only the Jeremiah Dexter house, which has been continuously owned by descendants of Jeremiah Dexter, remains of this original Dexter family settlement. It is still (in 1976) in Dexter family ownership.

The arrival of the French Army in Newport in mid-July of 1780, too late in the season to be of any offensive help to the American Army, necessitated their quartering in Rhode Island during the winter of 1780-1781. The Army left Rhode Island the following June to join General Washington's forces near Yorktown, Virginia, camping enroute on a plain in the southwestern section of Providence. In November of 1782, on the triumphant return march of the French Army from the decisive victory at Yorktown, this campground was again occupied. However, the owner of the site refused to permit the French to cut wood for fuel and barracks, and the following day Rochambeau marched his troops to a new encampment on the Dexter farm.

(See continuation sheet 2)
The Dexter property was ideal for the camp. It was situated on high and well-aired ground and was located close enough to Providence and Pawtucket for the convenience of the commissaries, yet remote enough to create a buffer zone between the troops and the citizens of Providence. Reverend Edwin H. Stone in Our French Allies (1884) described the campground:

The spot selected for the camp was a plateau on the summit of the ridge lying east of "Pawtucket Avenue" (now North Main Street). Each side was lined with tents. On the eastern side were several ranges of huts... (each) fifteen feet long and twelve feet wide. A large headquarters tent, surmounted by an ornamental urn, was pitched near the western side.

Although it is not so recorded, it is likely the French were offered the hospitality of Dexter's house. They stayed for three weeks, building barracks, parading and resting until word arrived from Boston that the French fleet was prepared to embark the Army. To cover the cost of the wood cut and damage done, Jeremiah Dexter was paid $1,446 in Continental currency, which soon became worthless. On December 4, 1782, the Army decamped, leaving the Dexter farm and Providence.

The French campsite remained a well known site, and in 1865 a survey was made of the camp by Reverend Stone, assisted by Henry Davis. They were able to trace out and clearly define the sites of 313 huts, tents, and fire pits, and a map of their findings was published in Our French Allies. Later in the nineteenth century an effort was made to preserve the site since many of the physical remains of the camp were still visible. Unfortunately, all that came of this was the erection of a commemorative plaque in 1911 on a small lot at the corner of Summit Avenue and Brewster Street several blocks from the Dexter house. Today, the Jeremiah Dexter farmhouse remains the only significant marker of the French campsite.

Historic American Building Survey Inventory, R.I.-5; 9 sheets, 4 photographs; No. 157.


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.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA
ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre
UTM REFERENCES
A B C D
ZONE EASTING NORTHING ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

FORM PREPARED BY
NAME / TITLE Mrs. George E. Downing, Chairman
Edward F. Sanderson, Survey Specialist
ORGANIZATION R. I. Historical Preservation Commission
STREET & NUMBER 150 Benefit Street
CITY OR TOWN Providence
STATE Rhode Island

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE
TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer
DATE April 30, 1976

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
Jeremiah Dexter House  
957 North Main Street, Providence, Rhode Island  
Photographer: B. Christopher Bene  
Date: 1972  
Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission  
Kitchen hearth.
Jeremiah Dexter House
957 North Main Street, Providence, Rhode Island

Photographer: B. Christopher Bene    Date: 1972

Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Door from kitchen into southern lean-to.
Jeremiah Dexter House
957 North Main Street, Providence, Rhode Island

Photographer: Christopher Bene    Date: 1972
Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Exterior view from the southwest.