United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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 Plain Farm House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 108 Webster Avenue

city, town Providence vicinity of congressional district #2, Edward J. Beard

country Rhode Island code 44 county Providence code 007

3. Classification

Category district X building(s) X structure X site Public Acquisition

Ownership public private both

Status X occupied unoccupied work in progress

Present Use agriculture commercial educational entertainment government industrial

Present Use museum park religious military transportation

Present Use scientific

Accessible yes: restricted X yes: unrestricted no

Present Use site Public Acquisition Accessible

Present Use both

Present Use being considered

4. Owner of Property

name William Beeman

street & number 108 Webster Avenue

city, town Providence vicinity of state Rhode Island 02909

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Providence City Hall

street & number 25 Dorrance Street

city, town Providence state Rhode Island 02909

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Providence Citywide Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes X no

date 1975 et seq.

depository for survey records Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

city, town 150 Benefit Street, Providence state Rhode Island 02909
7. Description

The Plain Farm House is a two-and-a-half-story, wood-frame, clapboard-sheathed Federal farmhouse with a flank-gable roof and a two-story, gable-roof ell more or less centered on the rear of the main block (Photograph 1). The house is typical for the period in both construction and plan.

The symmetrical facade is five bays wide. The center entrance (Photograph 2) is articulated by narrow reeded pilasters which frame four-panel sidelights flanking the original six-panel door and supporting a semi-elliptical wooden fan above. The fan is capped with a moulding and a large central keystone. Window frames throughout the house are of simple, pegged heavy-plank construction with slightly projecting drip caps above; windows on the main block are filled with original six-over-six sash, while those in the ell are two-over-two. The window frames on the second story abut the moulded cornice, and it is mitred around them.

The plan (See Continuation Sheet) of the main block is typical of the turn of the nineteenth century: the center hall extends half the depth of the house and is flanked by parlors on the front; two additional rooms are in either of the rear corners and are separated by an auxiliary staircase (probably added in the late nineteenth century) and a closet. Chimney stacks are placed between the front and rear rooms on either side of the house. The plan is identical on the second floor.

Interior detail is simple. The front staircase (Photograph 3) has a simple, turned newel post of mahogany; its handrail, also mahogany, is supported by unadorned one-inch square balusters of painted pine, spaced two to a step. The riser ends are decorated with a ninety-degree arched molding which connects the bottom of the riser with the rear of the tread; the stringer is a reeded half-round moulding (See Figure ). Mantelpieces in the rear rooms and the northwest parlor on the first floor are simple, Federal examples with reeded pilasters. The mantel in the northeast parlor (Photograph 4) is more elaborate: narrow, engaged, three-quarter columns are applied on the front and sides of the mantelpiece, and these in turn support a fluted impost block which is below a fluted projecting panel. Simple, cyma recta chair rails surround all the rooms in the main block of the house, save for the northeast parlor, though ghosting on the window sills indicates that this room as well probably had wainscotting and a chair rail. All posts in the main block of the house are eased and beaded. Floors throughout the house are white pine planks, approximately ten inches wide.

The ell was probably added sometime in the early to middle years of the nineteenth century. Unlike the main block, it has no encased posts and its beams show signs of circular sawing.

1 Other examples of this particular form includes the Battey-Barden House on Plainfield Pike in Scituate and the Rudolphus B. Johnson House, 43 Miller Street, Warren
PLAIN FARM HOUSE
108 WEBSTER AVENUE
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

SKETCH PLAN
NOT TO SCALE
8. Significance

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<th>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</th>
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Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Plain Farm House is an architecturally important example of the late eighteenth/early nineteenth-century rural type, and its position in Providence's urban built fabric is indicative of the city's growth and transformation.

In its present, relatively unaltered, state, the house is a solid representative of the vernacular farmhouse type constructed throughout the state at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Its use of a large center hall with twin interior chimney stacks and a wooden fan over the entrance indicate stronger Federal influences than usually found in farmhouses of the period.

Originally in the Town of Johnston (set off from Providence in 1759), Plain Farm House faces north toward Plainfield Street (originally Plainfield Pike, 1729, and later the Norwich Pike, established in 1803). It seems likely that the house was built soon after the opening of the Norwich Pike and possibly in direct response to this opening. By the 1850s, the "Plain Farm Plat," owned by the West Providence Land Company, appears on several maps. Attempts were made to sell off portions of this farm, as well as adjacent land, for house lots in the 1860s, but the area was still too remote for successful marketing. Only in the late years of the nineteenth century did growth of the City of Providence create a demand for housing in this area: by the 1890s a number of two- and three-family houses were rising, and this portion of Johnston was reannexed to Providence in 1898. Today the house sits on a small lot, surrounded by a twentieth-century residential neighborhood.

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1 Deed research has yielded no information previous to 1898; no cross-reference system for properties formerly in the Town of Johnston is used.
9. Major Bibliographical References

City of Providence, Tax Assessor's Records.

H.F. Walling, Map of the City of Providence, 1847.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrange name Providence

UTM References

 UMTR References

Zone | Easting | Northing
---|---|---
A | 1,9 | 2,9, 6, 4, 6, 0 | 4, 6, 3, 1, 5, 5, 0
B | 1 | 1 |
C | 1 | 1 |
D | 1 | 1 |
E | 1 | 1 |
F | 1 | 1 |
G | 1 | 1 |
H | 1 | 1 |

Verbal boundary description and justification:

Providence Tax Assessor's Plat 108, Lot 463

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Wm. McKenzie Woodward/Senior Historic Preservation Planner

organization R.I. Historical Preservation Commission

street & number 150 Benefit Street

telephone (401) 277-2678

city or town Providence

state Rhode Island 02903

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

<table>
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<th>national</th>
<th>state</th>
<th>local</th>
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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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Keeper of the National Register

Chief of Registrations
Removed for Providence Book
8 November 1965
WWW
PLAIN FARM HOUSE
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

Photographer: Warren Jagger

Date: April, 1980

Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Plain Farm House, view from northeast

Photograph 1
PLAIN FARM HOUSE
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

Photographer: Warren Jagger

Date: April 1980

Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Front Entrance

Photograph 2
PLAIN FARM HOUSE
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

Photographer:  Warren Jagger

Date:  April 1980

Negative:  Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Front Hall

Photograph 3
PLAIN FARM HOUSE
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

Photographer: Warren Jagger

Date: April 1980

Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

Mantelpiece, northeast parlor

Photograph 4
Plain Farm House
Providence, Rhode Island

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