**NAME**

Henry Marchant Farm

**LOCATION**

**STREET & NUMBER**

South County Trail

**CITY, TOWN**

South Kingstown

**STATE**

Rhode Island

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

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

South Kingstown Town Hall

**STREET & NUMBER**

66 High Street

**CITY, TOWN**

Wakefield

**STATE**

Rhode Island

**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
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

**NAME**

Edward C. Prest, William Marchant Prest, Judith P. Bowden

**STREET & NUMBER**

165 Harvard Avenue

**CITY, TOWN**

Rockville Center

**STATE**

New York

**REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

**TITLE**

South Kingstown Broadbrush

**DATE**

April 1975

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS**

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

**CITY, TOWN**

Providence

**STATE**

Rhode Island
DESCRIPTION

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONDITION</th>
<th>CHECK ONE</th>
<th>CHECK ONE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>XEXCELLENT</td>
<td>_DETERIORATED</td>
<td>_UNALTERED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_GOOD</td>
<td>_RUINS</td>
<td>_ALTERED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>_FAIR</td>
<td>_UNEXPOSED</td>
<td>_ORIGINAL SITE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


THE CELLAR EXTENDS ONLY BENEATH THE FRONT PARLORS AND IS PART DRY AND PART MORTARED-STONE CONSTRUCTION; STONE STEPS LEAD TO THE FRONT HALL, AND A BULKHEAD TO THE OUTSIDE. THE ATTIC CONTAINS A CHAMBER FOR SMOKING MEAT ON THE EAST SIDE OF THE CHIMNEY.
Only a few modifications have been made to the house and these in no way impinge upon its integrity. The original roof, shown as a gable-on-hip form in an early view (figure 1) and characteristic of the 1720-1740 period, was probably replaced with the current gable form at the end of the eighteenth or beginning of the nineteenth century; its framing is typical of that period. Other changes include the Federal mantels (probably installed around the time the roof was changed); the construction of a lean-to addition across the rear; the closet in the southeast upstairs chamber; and the division of the rear center room on the second floor to accommodate bathrooms and the rear stair. In addition, the entire facade was restored in the early 1970s, but construction techniques and materials match the original.

Several outbuildings complete the farm complex (see sketch plan). To the rear of the house are a cistern, three outbuildings, and--slightly removed--the foundations of an early barn (shown in an early view, figure 1), which burned in 1955. Directly behind the house is a one-and-a-half-story, shingled barn; an old privy is immediately adjacent. To the northwest of the house is a modest shingle shed and carriage house, built sometime in the nineteenth century on the site of an earlier shed (see figure 1). The original well remains much as it was in the eighteenth century a few yards southeast of the house.

Northwest of the house and near the center of the property is a family cemetery (figure 5), surrounded by a low stone wall erected by Frank Marchant in 1925. The cemetery contains a number of family graves--including that of William Marchant (1774-1857), Henry's son, and is said to contain the graves of several Indians and Henry Marchant's slaves.
HENRY MARCHANT HOUSE
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND

SKETCH PLAN — NOT TO SCALE

KEY
1. HOUSE
2. WELL
3. FOUNDATIONS OF EARLY BARN
4. BARN
5. PRIVY
6. CARRIAGE HOUSE & SHED
7. CEMETERY

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET 2

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 3
HENRY MARCHANT HOUSE
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND
SKETCH PLAN—NOT TO SCALE.
The Henry Marchant Farm is an outstanding complex, important as the home of Henry Marchant, Rhode Island Attorney General and Revolutionary War patriot; as an intact farm complex dating from the mid-eighteenth century and owned by one family since 1774; and as a well-preserved mid-eighteenth-century country house of considerable architectural interest. As such it achieves political, social, and architectural significance.

Henry Marchant (1741-1796) was reared in Newport in the home of his step-mother, Isabel Ward Marchant, whose family led the southern faction in an annual electoral battle for control of the colony's government during the middle years of the eighteenth century. Her brother Samuel Ward, thrice governor of Rhode Island, was Marchant's political mentor and legal client. In 1766, Ward's ascendant political faction was instrumental in securing a position for Marchant as assistant to the Attorney General. Marchant was subsequently elected Attorney General in 1770, and held that office until 1777. In 1771-1772 he was a colonial agent to London, where he began an intimate acquaintance with Benjamin Franklin, which included a journey to Scotland. After his return to Rhode Island, he became a member of the Committee of Correspondence for the Colony.

He represented Rhode Island at the Continental Congress from 1777 to 1780 and again in 1783. After the Revolution, Marchant served in the Rhode Island General Assembly and participated, as an associate of James Mitchell Varnum, in the 1786 case of Trevett vs. Weeden, which challenged state fiscal policy and established legal precedents for the role of the judicial branch of government. Marchant worked for the Rhode Island ratification of the Constitution in 1790. President Washington appointed him a District Court Judge in 1790, which post he held until his death in 1796.


Henry Marchant bought his South Kingstown farm in 1774 or 1775 from the Babcocks, a South County family at least politically allied with the Ward faction if not, in fact, friends of Marchant. This move proved expedient particularly in view of the British occupation of Newport during the Revolution, and Marchant's position as a Narragansett Plantation owner with mercantile and professional ties to Newport parallels that of other South County landowners. His son William (1774-1857) likewise commuted between the farm and Newport, where he maintained his commercial interests, and his letters home to his family provide excellent documentation of the workings of an early nineteenth-century farm. It is likely that the structural changes made to the house were executed during William's ownership. The land was regularly farmed throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, but in recent years has been used as a rural retreat for the family, who are direct descendants of Henry Marchant.

Continuous farm and country-retreat use has necessitated little change to the Henry Marchant House, which remains, as it was by the end of the eighteenth century, a handsome, substantial farm dwelling distinguished by its bold, simple detailing, its heavy timber frame, and its unusual interior sliding shutter panels. Its architectural significance is heightened by its relatively unaltered state.

This well-maintained home of an important Revolutionary War-era figure and his descendants is one of the best documented and best-preserved of its type in the state and an eminent candidate for entry on the National Register of Historic Places.
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 90 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A [1, 9] [21, 8, 3, 2, 5, 0] [4, 5, 9, 5, 8, 0, 0] B [1, 9] [21, 8, 3, 5, 6, 0] [4, 5, 9, 5, 1, 2, 0]

ZONE EASTING NORTHING ZONE EASTING NORTHING

c [1, 9] [21, 8, 2, 4, 2, 0] [4, 5, 9, 4, 6, 3, 0] d [1, 9] [21, 8, 2, 6, 9, 0] [4, 5, 9, 5, 4, 1, 0]

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Town of South Kingstown, Rhode Island, Assessor’s map 2-6, Block 109, Lot 0L27.

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Wm. McKenzie Woodward/Senior Historic Preservation Planner

ORGANIZATION
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

STREET & NUMBER
150 Benefit Street

CITY OR TOWN
Providence

STATE
Rhode Island

CODE
02903

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 June 8, 1979

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEGER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
HENRY MARCHANT PARK
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND

Photographer: Richard Longstreth
Date: February 1976
Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
Cemetery, view southeast toward main house

Figure 5
HENRY MARCHANT FARM
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND

Date: February 1976
Photographer: Richard Longstreth
Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
Southwest chamber, second floor, showing sliding window panels

Figure 4
HENRY MARCHANT FARM
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND

Photographer: Richard Longstreth
Date: February 1976
Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
Facade of main house, view from southeast

Figure 2
HENRY MARCHANT FARM
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND

Photographer: Richard Longstreth
Date: February 1976
Negative: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
Front door, detail

Figure 3
HENRY HARCOURT FARM
SOUTH KINGSTOWN, RHODE ISLAND

Anonymous Artist
Late eighteenth century, probably between 1775 and 1785
Original: Rhode Island Historical Society
Negative: Rhode Island Historical Society
View of the Henry Harcourt Farm from the south

Figure 1