STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

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STAR OF THE STICK STYLE: CUTLER HOUSE LISTED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER

A house on the East Side of Providence has received federal recognition for its contributions to the history of architecture. Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, announced that the National Park Service has added the Susan S. and Edward J. Cutler House to the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the Federal Government's official list of properties throughout the United States whose historical and architectural significance makes them worthy of preservation. Built in 1880, the house is an unusually well-preserved example of a Late Victorian, Stick-style dwelling with many of its historic finishes and architectural features remaining intact.

The Susan S. and Edward J. Cutler House is located on the north side of Woodbine Street, near its intersection with North Main Street, in the Mount Hope neighborhood of Providence. It is a one-and-a-half story, balloon frame, Late Victorian, Stick-style cottage built in 1880. The house has a rectangular bay window on the south façade, a front entrance porch on the west elevation, and a cross-gable roof. A ca. 1921 one-story, gable-roof, wood-frame garage stands directly behind the house.

The Stick style was popular in the Northeast from the 1860s to the 1880s. Hallmarks of the style include wood siding; steeply-pitched, cross-gable roofs; and decorative trusses – or "stick work" – in the gable peaks. Stick style architecture appeared frequently in house pattern books of the period, which promoted affordable and comfortable designs for homes to the middle class. Technological advancements in wood-working, such as the development of balloon-frame construction and the mass production of wire nails, inspired a house building boom. Standardized millwork made ornamental elements, such as brackets, scrolls and bargeboard, available to a wide audience.

This part of Woodbine Street was formerly part of the Cyrus Grant Estate in the rural outskirts of Providence. The Grant Estate was surveyed, platted, and subdivided into house lots, in response to Providence's rapidly growing population. The Mount Hope neighborhood was close to the industrial corridor along the Moshassuck River, and the introduction of street railway service along North Main Street in 1875 shortened the commuting time to downtown. During the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the neighborhood became a streetcar suburb, with a

rectilinear street pattern and small, narrow house lots that contained detached, single-family houses with small front yards.

In 1879, Susan S. Cutler paid $200 for two lots in the Grant Estate Plat, one on Woodbine Street and one on Lancaster Street. Susan and her husband Edward J. Cutler, a broom manufacturer, erected the first house in the William G. Grant Estate plat and moved in by 1881. Ten years later, the Cutler family sold their house and the adjoining lot. The new owner, Abel P. Inman, was a railroad engineer. He rented the Woodbine Avenue house to tenants. The demand for rental housing was strong in Providence at this time, as immigration swelled the city's population. The Mount Hope neighborhood took on a more urban character, becoming densely built-up with multi-family housing.

From 1906 to 1910, the Smith family resided in the house. Philip Smith was an Irish-born clerk and meat cutter. From 1911 to 1913, John Campbell, a rubber worker born in Scotland, lived at 12 Woodbine Street with his daughters Jeannie, a bookkeeper, and Sarah, a clerk for Brown & Sharpe Manufacturing. The last family to rent 12 Woodbine Street was Weston Eayrs and Carrie Chilson Smith.

In 1915, hostler Frank Kiernan purchased the property. His descendants would continue to live here until 1981. The house remained in the family until 1980, when Frank's daughter Mary sold the property to the current owner, Jill Tyler. Her strong preservation ethic has ensured that the Cutler House has retained a remarkable degree of architectural integrity, and today the structure is arguably the best preserved house on Woodbine Street.

The National Register nomination for the Cutler House was prepared by preservation consultant Dylan Peacock. RIHPHC's Executive Director Edward Sanderson commented, "The history of this late 19th-century house and its multiple owners and tenants reflects the transformation of Providence into a metropolis of diverse families and neighborhoods. The 'new' houses built more than a century ago like the Cutler House have become part of the city's heritage."

In addition to honoring a property for its contribution to local, state, or national history, listing on the National Register provides additional benefits. It results in special consideration during the planning of Federal or federally assisted projects and makes properties eligible for Federal and Rhode Island tax benefits for historic rehabilitation projects. Owners of private property listed on the National Register are free to maintain, manage, or dispose of their property as they choose. As the state office for historic preservation, the Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission is responsible for reviewing and submitting Rhode Island nominations to the National Register.

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