



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS  
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**DEEP ROOTS IN WESTERLY:  
PERRY HOMESTEAD LISTED ON NATIONAL REGISTER**

A family compound developed over the course of two centuries in Westerly has received federal recognition for its contributions to the history of architecture and landscape architecture. Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, announced that the National Park Service has added the Perry Homestead Historic District 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. The Perry Homestead Historic District presents an array of well-preserved historic residences built, updated, and restored in a designed landscape that joins the properties in a unified composition.

The Perry Homestead Historic District occupies approximately 8.5 acres at the corner of Margin and Beach streets in the southern end of downtown Westerly. The district is located on the eastern shore of the Pawcatuck River. It includes a total of six houses set in a verdant, park-like landscape featuring wooded areas, open lawn planted with large specimen trees, and intimate garden rooms.

At the beginning of the 19th century, Thomas Perry (1765-1826) purchased over 100 acres of farmland at the southern edge of Westerly village. A schoolmaster and Quaker from Charlestown, Perry came to Westerly to serve as cashier at the newly-established Washington Bank (now known as Washington Trust). Over the next two centuries, six generations of Perry family members would serve as the administrative officers, CEOs, treasurers, presidents, trust officers, and directors of the bank.

In 1849, Thomas's son, Charles Perry, Sr., built a large, Greek Revival-style house at 4 Margin Street. Around the same time, two other Greek Revival-style residences were built at 8 Margin Street (for Captain Daniel F. Larkin—not a Perry family member) and at 17 Beach Street (owned by Charles Sr.) probably to house a caretaker. In 1873, a Second Empire-style dwelling was erected at 2 Margin Street for Charles's brothers Thomas Perry, Jr. and Simeon. The three brothers operated a gentleman's farm spanning the two properties at the north end of the Perry Homestead Historic District. Features included hay fields, pastures, gardens and fruit orchards, as well as numerous outbuildings.

Beginning in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the next generation of Perrys acquired three more properties (2, 8, and 12 Margin Street) and transformed the area into a unified family compound. Three of the family's six houses were remodeled in the Colonial Revival style. The Perrys hired well-known landscape architect Warren H. Manning, who had designed nearby Wilcox Park (1899) and numerous private estates. Manning's firm was likely responsible for the extensive specimen tree plantings and may have had input into the installation of a curvilinear drive and removal/relocation of existing outbuildings and features. Later improvements have been attributed to landscape architect Arthur Asahel Shurcliff, who had worked with the Perry family on projects at Westerly Hospital (1920) and Wilcox Park. Shurcliff likely designed three garden rooms in the Colonial Revival style and a pergola garden.

The Perrys continued to reshape the family estate. In 1930, Arthur L. Perry moved his Shingle Style house (built about 1900) from Elm Street to 15 Beach Street. In 1931-32, noted restoration architect Norman Isham oversaw an extensive restoration of the Lewis-Card-Perry House at 12 Margin Street, and Arthur Sylvester of Warren Manning's firm designed an adjacent water garden in 1940. Today, the Perry Homestead Historic District retains a high level of integrity and continues to convey the character of an aesthetically unified, turn-of-the-twentieth-century family compound.

The National Register nomination for the Perry Homestead Historic District was prepared by preservation consultant Richard C. Youngken with RIHPHC architectural historian Joanna Doherty. RIHPHC's Executive Director Edward Sanderson commented, "The architecture and designed landscape of the Perry Homestead are a remarkable monument of the history of one of its leading families."

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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