

KENYON VILLAGE
Kenyon School Road, Sherman
Avenue, and Lewiston Avenue
Richmond
Washington County
Rhode Island

HABS No. RI-403

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RI
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

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Location: Kenyon School Road, Sherman Avenue, and Lewiston Avenue, Richmond, Washington County, Rhode Island.

USGS Carolina, RI Quadrangle (A through D) and USGS Kingston, RI Quadrangle (E and F), Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:

A: 19.280720.4591560
B: 19.280160.4591420
C: 19.280480.4591180
D: 19.280400.4591710
E: 19.280880.4591460
F: 19.280800.4591580

Present Owners: multiple ownership.

Present Use: residential and industrial.

Significance: Kenyon Village is significant in Rhode Island as a well preserved, small, nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century mill village which retains much of its material heritage. The buildings and land which comprise the village document the development of the area from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. Alterations to the buildings have been the result of changing economic conditions, and reflect the history of the village. Kenyon Village is an important cultural resource that preserves a wealth of information about Rhode Island's early milling and manufacturing history. Unlike most other mill villages in Richmond, the mills in Kenyon are still operating, and the village is generally well preserved.

PART I. KENYON VILLAGE: DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

Kenyon Village, located in the southern portion of Richmond and extending into Charlestown, contains a large mill complex, modest mill housing set close to the street, a village post office, an elaborate residence that is most likely the house of mill owner Elijah Kenyon, the Kenyon family cemetery, and several other structures which document the village's development from the mid-nineteenth century to the present. The village includes properties on Sherman and Lewiston Avenues and Kenyon School Road; the Pawcatuck River, once used as a source of power for the mill, runs through the village. The large textile mill complex along the Pawcatuck River on the north side of Sherman Avenue physically and visually dominates the village. Amtrak railroad tracks extend from east to west through the village just north of the mill complex.

The Kenyon Industries mill complex consists of a series of multi-story brick and stone buildings dominated by a square tower (1866) with mansard roof and granite quoins. The earliest portion of the mill dates to 1844 and is a 2-story, stuccoed-stone building, (133 x 24 ft) which has a low-pitched roof and a 1-story, stuccoed-stone extension. The former company store (1862) is located to the north of the main mill complex and is attached to a 1956 concrete block structure and an 1889, frame, hipped-roof structure, (48 x 80 ft) which is located to the south of the railroad tracks. The prominent 4-story, square, mansard-roof, central tower portion of the mill was constructed in 1866 (Kulik and Bonham 1978:220-221). Originally, this tower had a small, hipped-roof cupola with weathervane (Cole 1889:722). In 1893, a 2-story, stuccoed-stone mill located behind the other mills was completed. It has a low pitched roof, segmental-arch windows and a square central tower with quoined corners and round-arch windows. More recent multiple-story additions to the mill have occurred since 1966. They are located to the southwest along Sherman Avenue and are physically connected to the older portions of the mill by a bridge/overpass above the Pawcatuck River. A waste-water reservoir is located to the northeast of the mill along the tracks.

Just south of and immediately adjacent to the mill complex, at the southern entrance to the village, the Kenyon Arch Bridge (Rhode Island Bridge No. 148) carries Sherman Avenue over the Pawcatuck River. This shallow concrete arch bridge was constructed in 1913. The bridge's railings and spandrels both have recessed panels with hammered finishes, though erosion has made the contrast in surfaces difficult to discern. The bridge is significant as one of the first projects of the bridge department established within the Rhode Island State Board of Public Roads in 1912. The Kenyon Arch Bridge serves as a symbol of the origins of Rhode Island's modern road transportation system (Historic Resource Consultants 1988). The bridge is also known as Mallard's Bridge, after an early mill owner in Kenyon. Historically there have been a series of wooden bridges over the Pawcatuck River at this site, and the 1855 map shows a bridge here with the label "Mallard's Bridge" (Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission 1981:40). Employee parking lots are located across from the mill on both sides of the bridge.

The village post office at 37 Sherman Avenue, is directly across from the 1866 tower portion of the mill. This nineteenth-century building originally served as a residence, until just prior to 1889, when the Kenyon post office was established (Cole 1889:722-723). The building is set on a slope up from the street at a sharp curve in the road. It is a 2½-story, end-gable structure which is primarily clad in asbestos siding and rests upon a stone foundation. A second-story entrance is located on its south elevation. An early-twentieth century, 1½-story, hipped-roof, rectangular, Craftsman-style bungalow (48 Sherman Avenue), sheathed in wood shingles and set on a concrete foundation is located on the northwest corner of Sherman Avenue and Kenyon School Road. A small yard to the rear of the house separates it from the tracks to the north. A 1½-

story, hipped-roof, shingled garage is also associated with this property, which is enclosed by a chain link fence. Both the post office and bungalow are owned by Kenyon Industries.

Two sets of three 1½-story, side-gable, frame, rectangular, double-mill houses set on stone foundations are located on both the north and south sides of Sherman Avenue. Those on the south side of the street (43, 45, 47) are located on land which slopes down to the Pawcatuck River to the south. Each has two interior, brick chimneys located at the ridge line, 6/6 and 1/1 double-hung sash, and 3/3 double-hung sash below the eaves. Some alterations have occurred to these houses, including, but not limited to, synthetic siding, replacement windows, and doors. Those on the north side of the street (46-60) have had similar alterations and are located just south of the railroad tracks. Shrubs at the rear of the houses serve as a buffer between the houses and tracks. Each house has a centrally located gable dormer on its facade, an interior, brick chimney at the ridge line, and 6/1 and 1/1 double-hung sash.

The most notable residence in the village is a large, elaborate, 2½-story, cross-gable, frame, Italianate style house (61 Sherman Avenue) built in the late nineteenth century. This house may have been built for mill owner Elijah Kenyon who in "1872 had constructed one of the most attractive residences in the town, equipped with modern and luxurious appliances," which as of 1889, was still occupied by members of the Kenyon family (Cole 1889:749-750). This well-preserved house rests on a granite block foundation and is clad in clapboard with bracketed trim. The entrance is contained in a 1-story, flat-roof porch with fluted Corinthian columns. A garage/barn appears to the east of the main house at the end of a crushed gravel drive. The house stands on a large lot at the east end of the village and is accessed through a prominent entrance which includes ornamental iron gates set in granite posts.

Kenyon School Road Bridge (also called the Beaver River Road Bridge and the Kenyon Dye Works Bridge, Rhode Island Bridge No. 489) carries Kenyon School Road over two sets of Amtrak railroad tracks just south of the intersection of Kenyon School Road and Lewiston Avenue. This bridge, constructed in 1967, spans approximately 25 ft and arches slightly at its crest. The bridge rests directly on a poured concrete foundation which is directly tied into coursed stone abutments and a single, coursed stone retaining wall which extends along the south side of the tracks for approximately 150 ft. This wall stands approximately 12 ft in height at its western end and declines in height to about 2 ft at its eastern end. The bridge decking is constructed of new framing members. The bridge railing consists of square, frame posts with replaced wood members mounted horizontally.

Two buildings which both appear on the 1895 map of Richmond stand at the northern boundary of the village. A plain, 2½-story, cross-gable house (late nineteenth century) sheathed in wood shingles and set on a stone foundation is located on the northeast corner of Lewiston Avenue and Kenyon School Road. Across the street, at the northwest corner of the same intersection is a large, 2½-story, end-gable, rectangular barn (late nineteenth century) clad in vertical wood siding and asbestos shingles. This building's footprint appears on the 1895 map of Richmond and is labeled as "Livery." It is currently in poor condition and is owned by Kenyon Industries.

The Kenyon family cemetery is located on Lewiston Avenue north of the railroad tracks. This simple, rectangular cemetery, measuring approximately 40 x 60 ft is set back approximately 20 ft from Lewiston Avenue and is enclosed by a low, iron fence. The tracks and mill buildings are clearly visible from the cemetery. This well-kept plot contains three large granite monuments as well as graves for members of the

Kenyon family, including Abiel and Elijah Kenyon. The earliest known grave dates back to 1861. Originally, just west of this location, Lewiston Avenue ran south across the tracks (as shown on the 1895 map) and not eastward as it now does.

It should be noted that south of Kenyon Village and Route 2, is a group of seven, late-nineteenth-century mill houses associated with the Kenyon Mill, but located outside the village proper. The houses are arranged in two short rows. Each house is 2½-stories with two, small, brick, interior chimneys and two separate entrances in the center. These houses, simple structures, were built to house workers in the nearby Kenyon Mills (Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission 1981:53) and appear on the 1895 map of Charlestown with the label J. S. Kenyon.

A school house was constructed for Kenyon Mill in the late 1860s. It is located northeast of the village along Kenyon School Road beyond the boundaries of the village proper and is currently used as a private residence (Cole 1889:715) (Tootell 1977:89).

PART II. KENYON VILLAGE: HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Kenyon Village is a small mill community along the Pawcatuck River just north of Route 2 (South County Trail) in the southern part of Richmond and extending into Charlestown. The buildings and land which comprise the village document the development of the area from the mid-nineteenth century to the present day. Alterations to the buildings have been the result of changing economic conditions and reflect the history of the village. Kenyon Village is an important cultural resource that preserves a wealth of information about mill industry in rural Rhode Island. Its importance is increased by the loss elsewhere of similar elements of the state's early industrial heritage. The village's buildings and setting provide a sense of the scale of nineteenth-century industrial life and reflect the area's heritage. Further importance is given to Kenyon Village because, unlike most other mill villages in Richmond, the mills in Kenyon are still operating, and the village is generally well preserved (Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission 1977:9).

Most Rhode Island mill villages consist of one- and two-family worker houses, a company store, the owner's or superintendent's house, and an occasional church; Kenyon Village is no exception. Richmond's mill villages were typical of those throughout Rhode Island. Although much attention was given to manufacturing during the nineteenth century, the mill communities were small, compact places, occupying a very small part of Richmond's land (Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission 1977:15). In the early nineteenth century, the Pawcatuck River, which forms Richmond's southern border, was harnessed to power textile mills, and several industrial villages sprang up. By 1831 in Rhode Island, there were 119 cotton mills in the state operating a total of 238,877 spindles and employing 8,595 workers. In this period, the state's small, wood-frame spinning mills were eclipsed by larger, stone-rubble and ashlar structures devoted to both spinning and weaving. These mill buildings created a strong visual statement of the growth obtained through capitalism. Rhode Island's mills were the focal point of numerous mill villages generally located at individual water privileges scattered throughout the rural landscape. The years from 1820 to 1840 were a critical period of growth for the Rhode Island cotton textile industry. These years saw significant levels of mill expansion and increases in output, spurred by rising demand and the introduction of loom power. The railroad took the bulk of overland traffic created by this growth, and Rhode Island's first line, connecting Boston to Providence, was completed in 1835. Two years later, the Stonington line from

Providence to the Pawcatuck River was opened, passing through Kenyon Village and forming Rhode Island's section of the Boston to New York route (now the Amtrak main line) (Kulik and Bonham 1978:7-11).

It was during this period of Rhode Island's industrial development that Kenyon Village began to prosper. As early as 1772, a saw mill and an iron manufactory had existed in Kenyon where the mills are now located. This establishment was deeded by Samuel Stuart to Christopher Clarke (Irish 1877:46). In the early-nineteenth century, a Mr. Mallard built a factory here for the purpose of carding wool into rolls to be spun by hand. Connected with this was a fulling mill and cloth dressing apparatus (Irish 1877:50). In 1820 Thomas Holburton sold "Holburton's Mills," as Kenyon was then known, to Lewis Kenyon (Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission 1977:9). Lewis Kenyon continued the cloth dressing business until his death in 1839. A copartnership was then formed by his sons, Abial [*sic*] S. (1813-1875) and Elijah Kenyon (1815-1881) (Cole 1889:749-750).

The brothers continued the cloth dressing for a short time, but soon put in spinning and weaving machines and commenced to manufacture cloth. In 1844 they erected a new mill near the site of the old structure. It was larger, more complete, and had increased manufacturing facilities. It forms the core of the Kenyon Mill complex today. Following construction of the new mill, the Holburton name was dropped, and the village was referred to as "Kenyon's Mills." It is unclear when the name Kenyon replaced Kenyon's Mills. Meanwhile, Elijah Kenyon built the Laurel Glen mill in North Stonington, Connecticut which he operated for five years. Following this, in 1857, Elijah Kenyon returned to Richmond and purchased his brother Abial's interest in the Kenyon Mill (Cole 1889:749-750).

A second period of expansion occurred in the 1860s when Elijah Kenyon built a company general store (now encompassed in the mill complex) (1862), mill housing (1863), and the tower building (1866) for the manufacture of cotton yarns. In 1863 C. B. Coon was admitted as a partner in the Kenyon's Mills (Cole 1889:722-723), and business was conducted under the firm name of Kenyon & Coon. A new dye house was also built at this time, increasing facilities for dyeing and scouring wool. After the new mill was built, the existing water power was insufficient. A new steam engine was installed capable of running all the works, if necessary, independent of the water-wheel. In 1881 the Kenyon & Coon partnership was dissolved. John S. Kenyon acquired an interest in the business, under the firm name of E. Kenyon & Son. On the death of Elijah Kenyon, December 3, 1881, his son succeeded to the business (Cole 1889:749-750). The business carried on under the name E. Kenyon & Son, and continued to be successful with further expansion occurring with the erection of the freight house (1889) and the completion of the "big mill" (1894) for spinning and weaving woolen goods. When the "big mill" was constructed, the course of the Pawcatuck River was diverted. This led to a dispute between the two towns of Richmond and Charlestown as to how much of the property was in each township because the Pawcatuck River had been the original boundary between the towns. An act of the General Assembly in January 1940 finally settled the dispute. The act fixed the boundary along the old river bed and placed about half of the Finishing Room in Charlestown (Tootell 1977:91). The "big mill" now comprises the central portion of the present-day mill and was originally used to weave woolen cloth called "London Cloaking" (company archives).

In January 1889, a railroad station, Kenyon Station (not extant), was established along the main line of the New York, Providence and Boston Railroad which passes through the village (Cole 1889:722-723). It was a 1½-story, end-gable, rectangular, frame building with wide, overhanging eaves and a bracketed cornice. This building stood to the south of the tracks (1895 Everts & Richards), north of the company store.

By 1911, the fortunes of the Kenyon Mill had declined, and the Providence Board of Trade Journal of December 1911 reported that the real estate of the Kenyon Mills property was sold by the trustee on December 5, 1911. The main mill and a group of factory buildings were sold to F. P. Smith of Boston. On the following day, December 6th, the entire equipment of the plant was sold. The plant was then used by the Eastern Finishing Company for finishing awning and waterproofed fabrics. This company left in 1934, and the Kenyon Piece Dyeworks took over the property in 1936 and began renovations and improvements of the plant. Founded by Raymond Curtis and two others, the company originally had only 20 employees and concentrated on dyeing synthetic fabrics such as rayon and acetate. Kenyon Piece Dyeworks was one of first New England textile firms to be unionized in 1937. By 1964, the company also included the Peacedale Processing Co., Inc. in Peacedale (South Kingstown), Rhode Island, and Kenyon Southern Inc., in Rossville, Georgia (company archives).

Currently Kenyon Industries, Inc., formerly Kenyon Piece Dyeworks and now a division of Brookwood Companies Incorporated, operates the mill. This company is the country's leading commission finisher of high-quality woven synthetic fabric and the world's largest processor of sailcloth fabric. It employs over 300 men and women full-time. The fabrics produced at the mill are processed for a variety of markets, including consumer apparel, luggage, sailcloth, and industrial and government specification uses (Brookwood Companies Incorporated 1992). The plant continues to play an active role in the dyeing, finishing, coating, and printing processes and is a valued industry in the area. Kenyon Industries owns the barn at the northwest intersection of Lewiston Avenue and Kenyon School Road, the Kenyon Post Office (37 Sherman Avenue), and the 1½-story bungalow (48 Sherman Avenue) at the northwest corner of Sherman Avenue and Kenyon School Road.

Of the nineteenth-century mill villages in Charlestown, only Kenyon remains a functioning industrial village (Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission 1981:18); of those in Richmond, Kenyon is one of only a few with its mill still operating (Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission 1977:9). These villages are the legacy of a very active period in the towns' history as well as a tangible record of the people who built them. The village gains further significance through its associations with the Kenyon family, after which the village is named. The Kenyons were a prominent family in southern Rhode Island with members being mill owners and proprietors who prospered from their business exploits. The village of Kenyon capitalized on its fine water-powered site and railroad access. The twentieth century has brought relatively few changes, so that the stamp of the nineteenth century is still deeply imprinted on the village. From the early twentieth century to the present, few significant changes have occurred within the village, with the exception of the continued expansion of the mill complex. Today, Kenyon Village is still both industrial and residential in nature. The buildings and surrounding landscape continue to preserve the character of a nineteenth-century industrial village. Kenyon Village constitutes a relatively well preserved and integral village of the type that evolved throughout Rhode Island during the state's industrial heyday.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography

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1855 *Map of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*. New York, NY.

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1862 *Map of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*. New York, NY.

n. d. *Fire Insurance Map*. Kenyon Industries Inc.

B. Historic Views

Hussey Photograph Collection

Rhode Island State Archives, Providence, RI.

C. Interviews

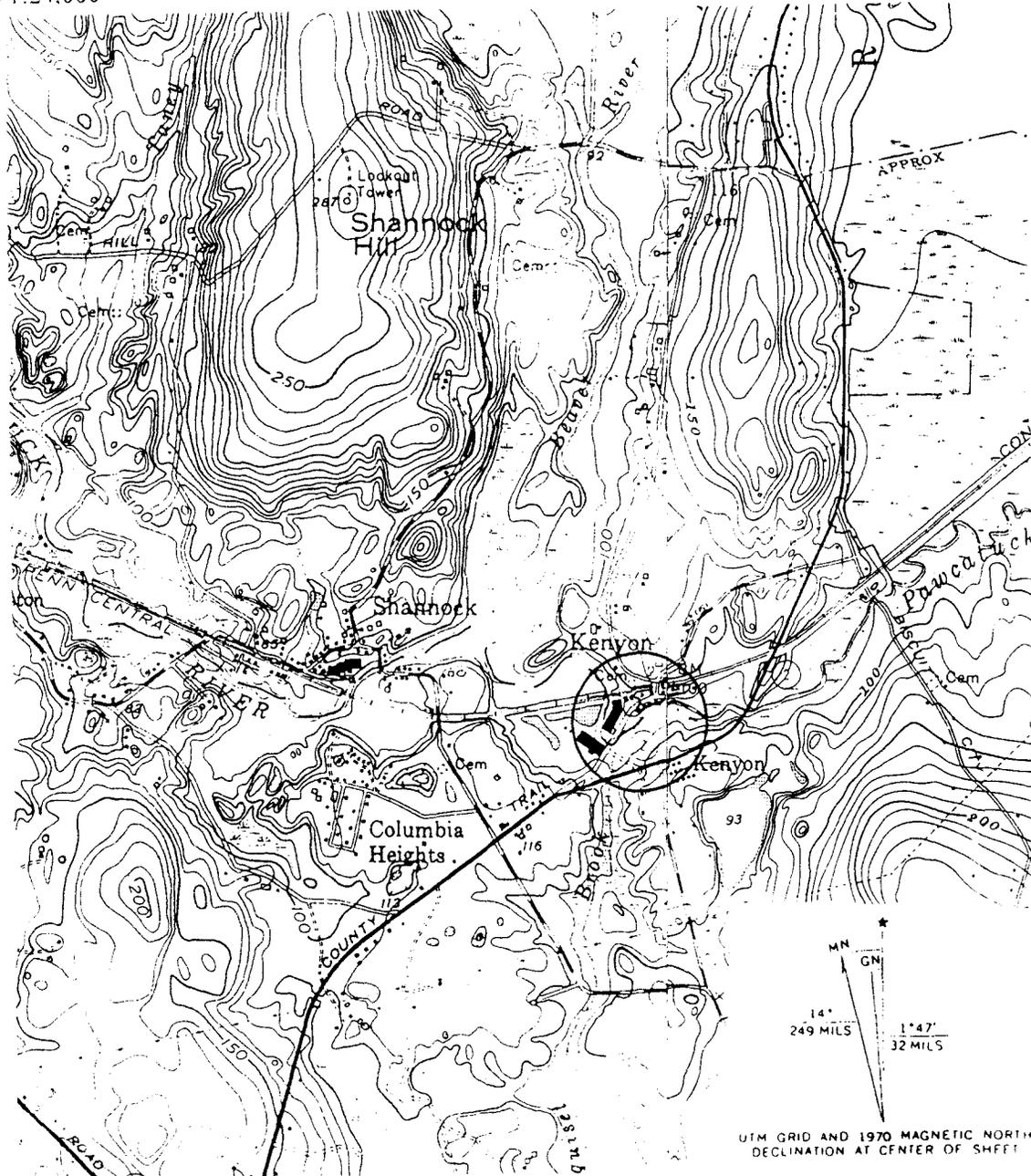
Barbara Burdick, Environmental Coordinator, Kenyon Industries Inc., August 1996.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

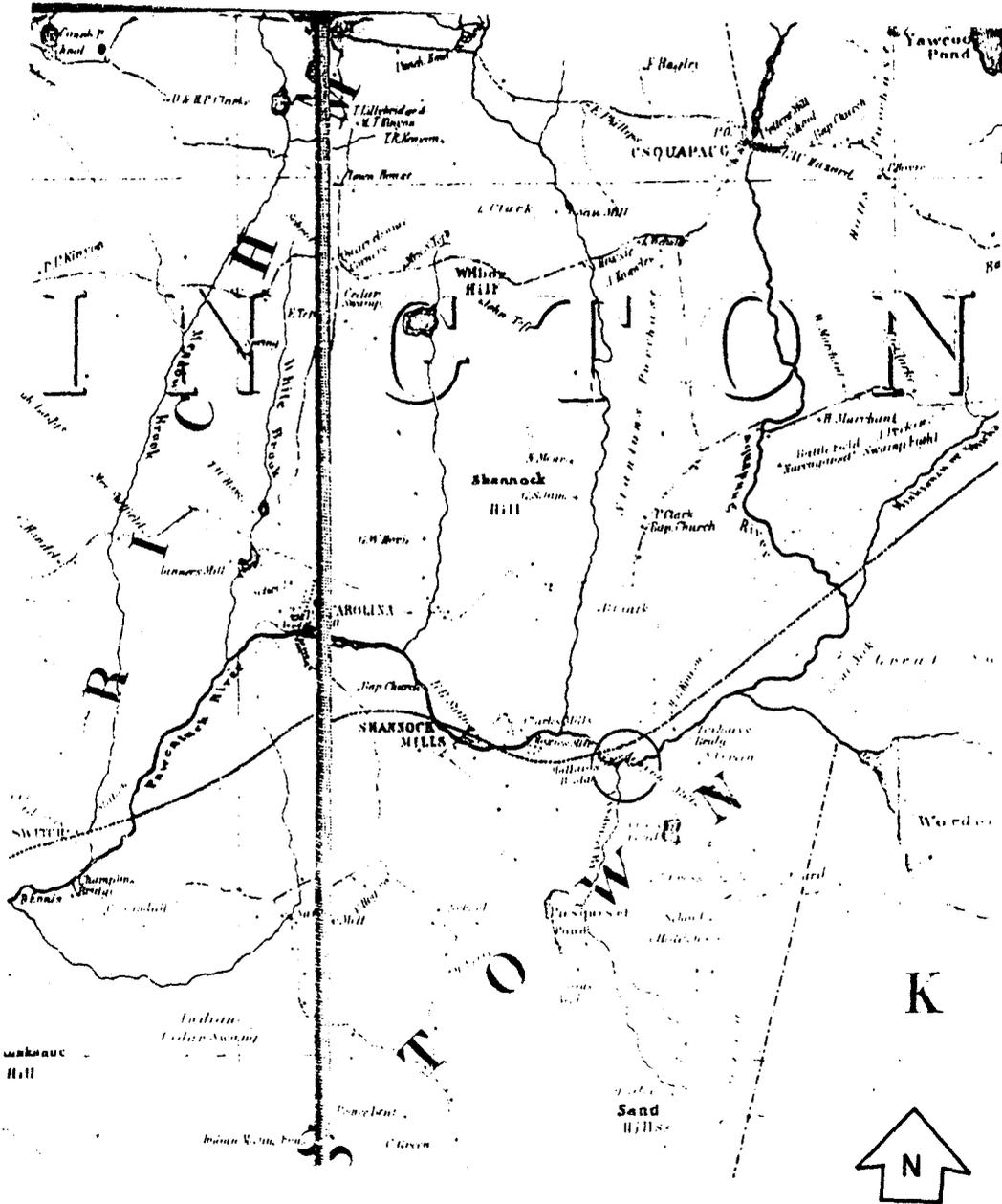
The National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), in association with the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA), is proposing a number of infrastructure projects to upgrade the Northeast Corridor Railroad right-of-way in Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. In consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs), Amtrak and FRA have determined that the proposed "Northeast Corridor Improvement Project—Electrification: New Haven, Connecticut to Boston, Massachusetts" project will have adverse impacts on significant historic properties. Three memoranda of agreement outlining stipulations to eliminate, minimize, or mitigate adverse project impacts have been drafted by Amtrak, the FRA, and the respective SHPOs, and have been accepted by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation. The stipulations include the recordation of Kenyon Village, Richmond-Charlestown, Rhode Island, a property eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, to Historic American Buildings Survey standards. The proposed project will necessitate the installation of catenary poles and overhead wiring and has been determined by the Rhode Island SHPO to cause an adverse effect.

The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL Inc.) of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, was retained by ABB Environmental Services, Inc. on behalf of Amtrak and FRA to prepare HABS documents for the village of Kenyon. This report was compiled in August 1996 by the PAL Inc. project team including Virginia H. Adams, Director of Architectural Projects, and Mary Kate Harrington, Architectural Projects Assistant. The large format archival photography was completed in August 1996 by Robert Brewster of Warren Jagger Photography, Inc., Providence, Rhode Island.

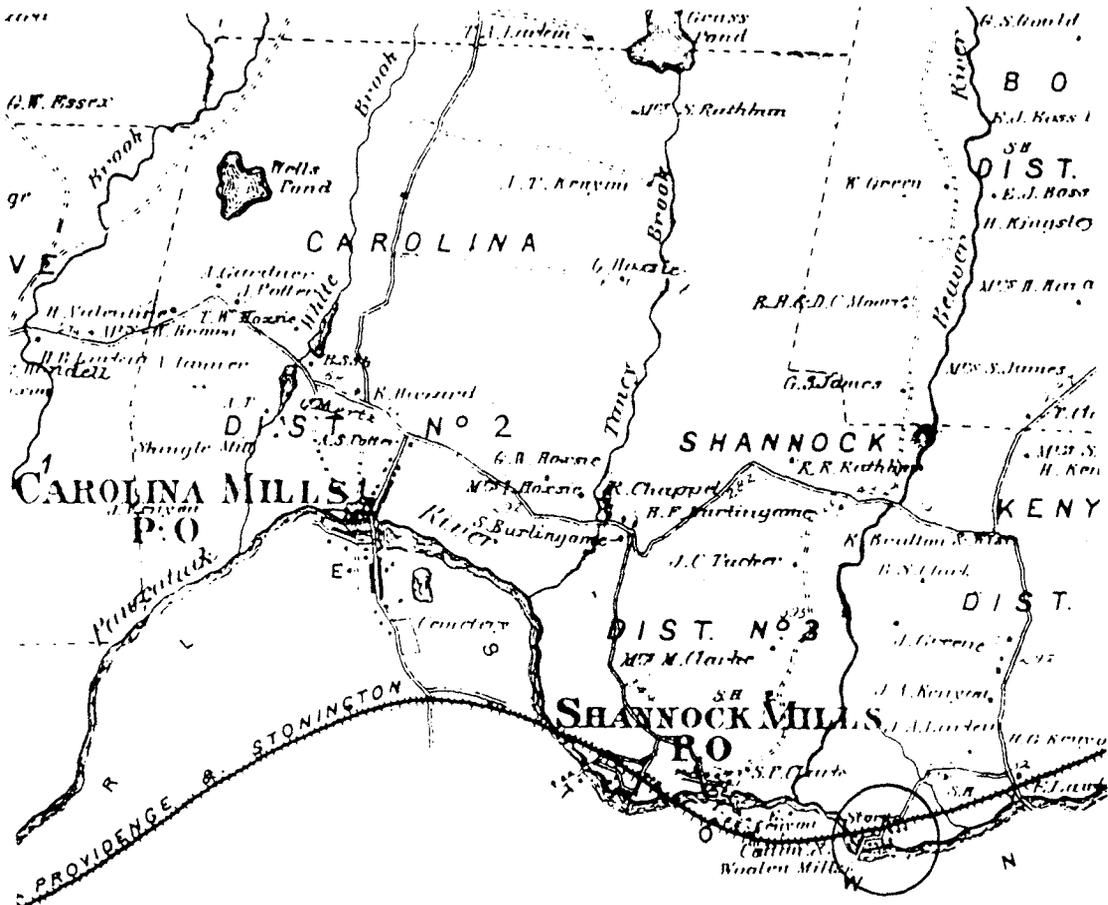
USGS Location Map
Kenyon Village
Richmond
Washington County, Rhode Island
Scale 1:24,000



Portion of a Map of
the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
Henry F. Walling 1855
Scale Unknown



Portion of an Atlas of
the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
D. G. Beers & Co. 1870
Scale Unknown



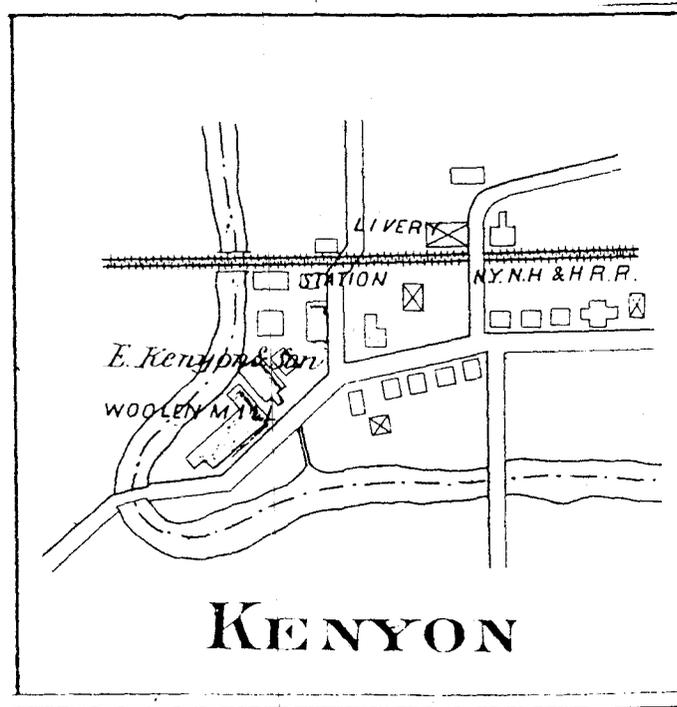
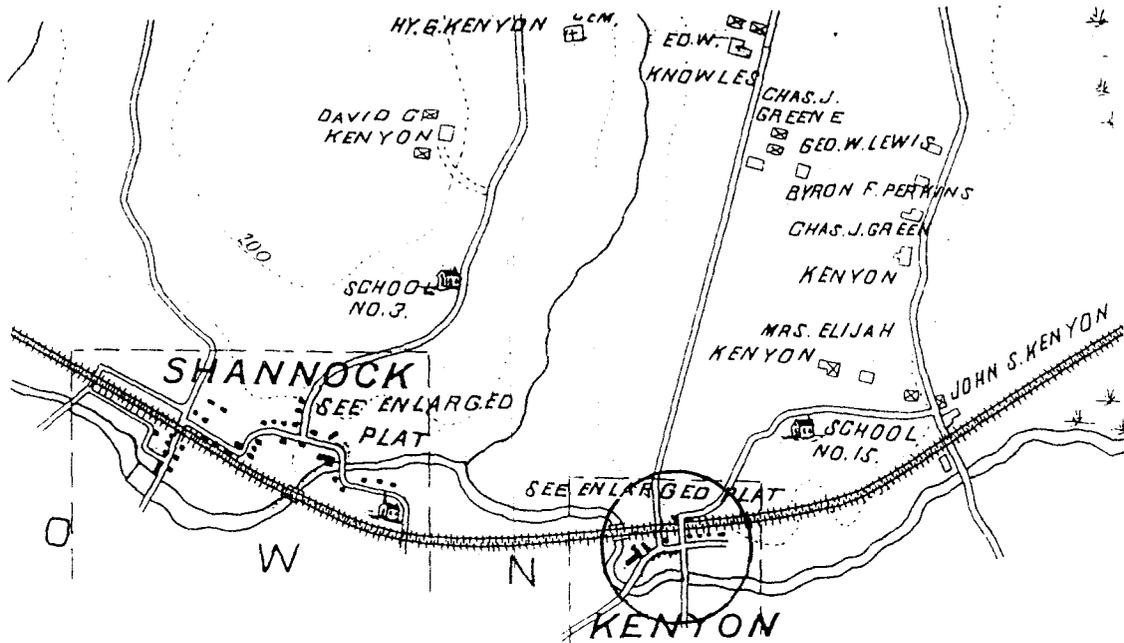
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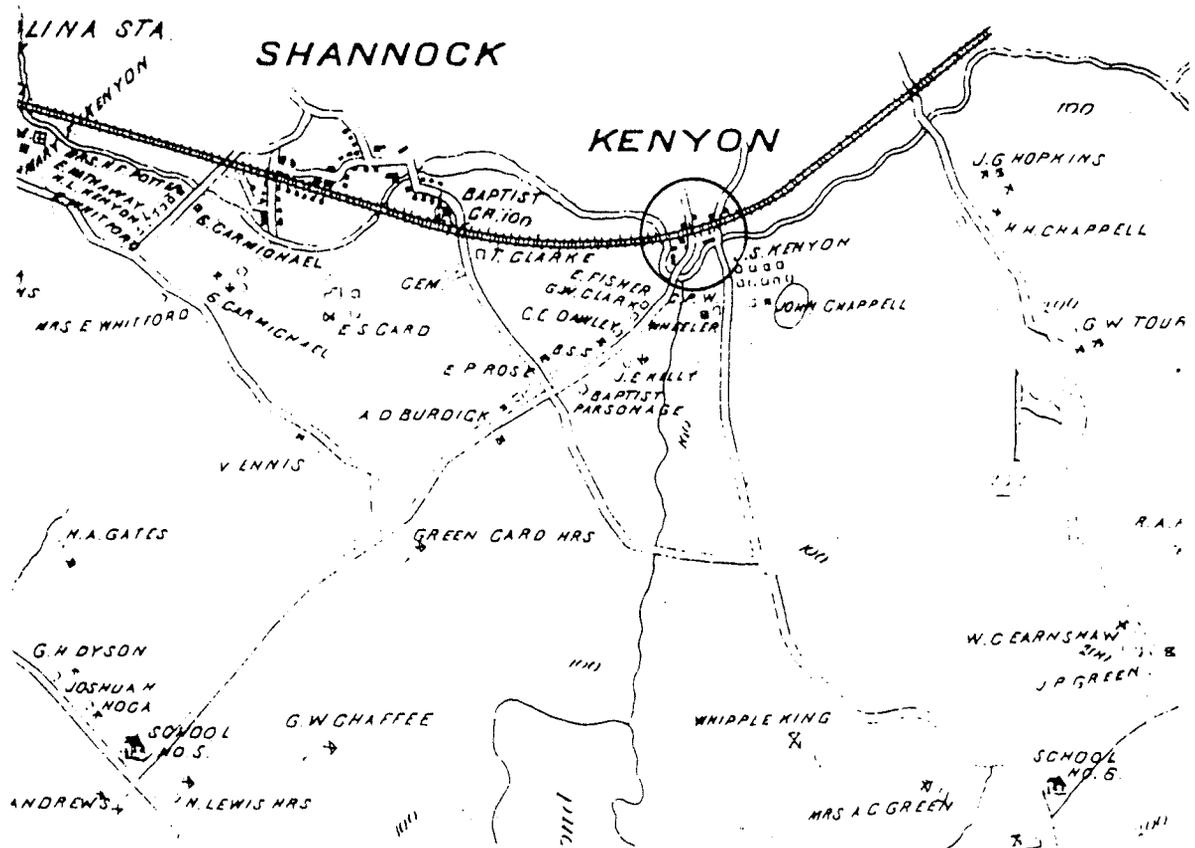
Washington County R.I.



Portion of a New Topographical Atlas
of Surveys: Southern Rhode Island
Town of Richmond
Everts & Richards 1895
Scale Unknown



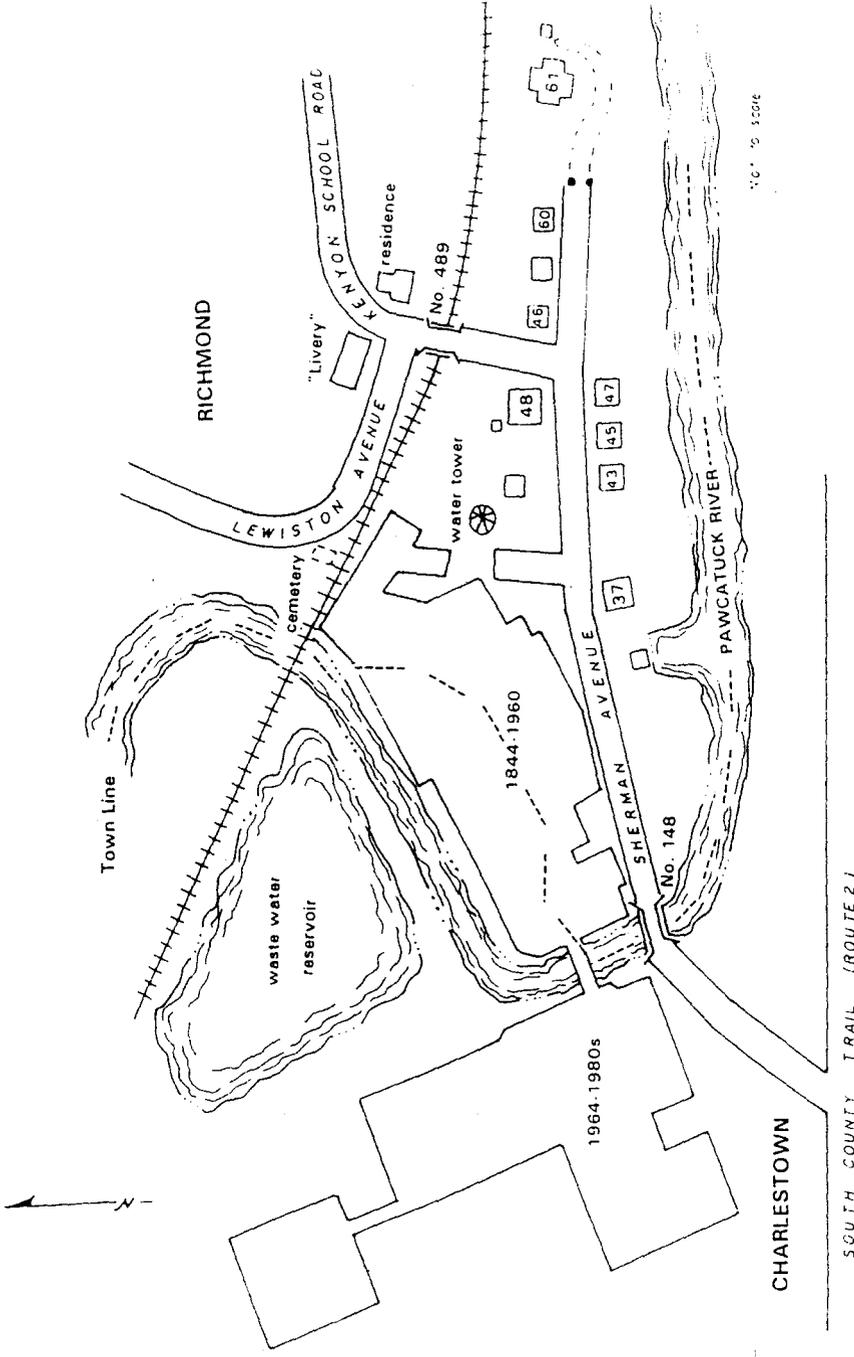
Portion of a New Topographical Atlas
of Surveys: Southern Rhode Island
Town of Charlestown
Everts & Richards 1895
Scale Unknown



TOWN OF
CHARLESTOWN
WASHINGTON CO. R.I.



Kenyon Village
Site Plan
Richmond
Washington County, Rhode Island
Scale Unknown



Street numbers given where known.