

Elder Ballou Meeting House
Cumberland, Rhode Island
Providence County

HABS No. 14

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4-CUMB,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

Historic American Buildings Survey
Philip D. Creer, District Officer
14 College Street, Providence, R. I.

HABS
R9
+ CUMB.

. ELDER BALLOU MEETING HOUSE
CUMBERLAND
RHODE ISLAND

Owner: Ballou Family

Date of Erection: About 1740

Architect: Unknown

Builder: Unknown

Present Condition: Good

Number of Stories: 1 story

Materials of Construction: Frame structure--with a pitched roof--old shingles (some saved) were split by hand, framework hewn of sturdy oak logs.

Other Existing Records: The Providence Plantations--by Greene, page 391--drawing.

Early Homes in Rhode Island--by Downing--drawing p.63, interior showing benches. Photograph p.58 (date given before 1740) interior looking towards the pulpit and the Elder's Bench. Drawing p.60 stairway and framing under gallery. Drawing p.62--gallery breast and corner framing. Ref. p.136--Quote: "had windows filled with diamond paned leaded glass at that late date-1749".

The Rhode Island Guide, reference page 389.

Additional Data:

In Fields Vol II, p.99, reference quote: "The Six Principle Church in Cumberland appears to have been organized in 1732. Although, like several others of the early churches of this order, the Cumberland Church has ceased to exist as an organization, it yet challenges attention by reason of its venerable sanctuary, known as the "Old Ballou Meeting House," still standing just north of Iron Mountain or Iron Rock Hill, in the northwestern part of the town.

The quaint building with its heavy, narrow gallery, is much resorted to by visitors, it being claimed that it was erected in 1740. The fact that the original deed of the land bears the date of 1749, "in the twenty-second year of the reign of George, King of Great Britain," suggests that year as the time of building the meeting house."

Reference, Early Homes of Rhode Island by Downing, p.59--quote: "Early in the eighteenth century, James, Oadian and Nathaniel Ballou, came to the northern part of Cumberland and settled in the "Attleborough Gore," then part of Massachusetts. In 1732, together with Elders Josiah and Nathaniel Cook, they organized their church of Six Principle Baptist Tenets. Elder Josiah Cook served as the first pastor and was followed by his nephew, Nathaniel.

In 1775 Elder Abner Ballou took over the minister's task and the clerical line passed out of the Cook family into the Ballou family; thereafter the meeting house became known as the Elder Ballou Meeting House."

Additional Data(cont'd)

Handbook of Historical Sites in Rhode Island by Providence Department of Public Schools, printed in 1936. Reference, page 51, Quote: "The Baptist Church in this section was started in 1732 and the Meeting House built largely through the efforts and contributions of the Ballou family was erected about 1740. The grave of Nathaniel Cook, the first pastor, is in the yard, dated 1773."



Philip D. Greer
District Officer for
Rhode Island.

TW 10/17/40