

STATE: Rhode Island
 COUNTY: Providence County
 FOR NPS USE ONLY
 ENTRY DATE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) (Type all entries complete applicable sections)

1. NAME

COMMON: John Brown House
 AND/OR HISTORIC: John Brown House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 52 Power Street
 CITY OR TOWN: Providence CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 1st
 STATE: Rhode Island CODE: 44 COUNTY: Providence CODE: 007

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Comments <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>office of historical society</u>

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Rhode Island Historical Society
 STREET AND NUMBER: 121 Hope Street
 CITY OR TOWN: Providence STATE: Rhode Island CODE: 44

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Providence City Hall
 STREET AND NUMBER: Dorrance and Washington Streets
 CITY OR TOWN: Providence STATE: Rhode Island CODE: 44

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
 DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local
 DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
 STREET AND NUMBER:
 CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Rhode Island
 COUNTY: Providence
 ENTRY NUMBER:
 DATE:
 FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The John Brown House is a large, square, three-story building of brick with four exterior chimneys and a central entrance in accord with colonial tradition. It has a hipped roof with a flat deck, finished with balustrades at both cornice and deck levels. The lower balustrade is composed of rows of turned balusters alternating with plain block panels and ornamented with flame finials. The balustrade above is of Chinese Chippendale design. The third-story windows are characteristically smaller than those of the lower stories, and are set close under the classic cornice. The facade is accented by a slightly projecting central pavilion crowned by its own pediment. A one story porch with sandstone Doric columns protects the entrance and a Palladian window under a brick relieving arch is used for the ornamental window above. Sandstone is also used for all of the window lintels.

A pedimented side entrance (now closed) on the west side opens onto a balustraded terrace which continues to the north into a pergola of Doric columns. The later rear additions harmonize perfectly with the original block and are unseen from the front facade. There is a dormer with broken scroll pediment on the west end east side. These are set back so they are not readily noticeable to disturb the flat roof profile.

The interior of the house is laid in the traditional Georgian plan of central stairhall with two rooms on either side. The grand staircase, rising in two flights in the traditional place at the rear of the hall, has beautifully twisted balusters and a gracefully curved railing finished in a spiral, turned around the twisted newels. They were considered almost essential for fine mansions in the Colonies during the early to mid-eighteenth century, and Newport account books show that Job Townsend and other cabinetmakers were often commissioned to make balusters. The rest of the boldly scaled, correct and richly used architectural detail comes from the pages of Gibbs, Swan, Langley, Salmon and other eighteenth-century architectural books.

A pair of engaged Ionic columns, placed opposite each other on either side of the hall form pedestals for architectural busts designed for the house. Paired doorways with broken scroll pediments above a modillioned and dentiled cornice and a full cornice ornamented with dentiles, modillions and a swag frieze fill the hall. The walls in all the rooms, no longer paneled or wainscoted, have heavily molded base and chair rails. The walls themselves were wallpapered.

The southeast parlor overmantel has double engaged mahogany pilasters supporting a broken pediment with polychrome bust. The mantel itself has a carved cushioned frieze supported by mahogany Ionic columns. Column pedestals, supporting architectural busts like those in the hallway, are used to frame the arched doorway from this room into the northeast parlor. These and the hall busts were ordered from

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian | 16th Century | 18th Century | 20th Century
 15th Century | 17th Century | 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1786-88

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The John Brown House, Providence, Rhode Island, is a magnificent example of a Late Georgian mansion. Built in 1786-88, at the end of the colonial era, the exterior design is conservative. The three story brownstone trimmed brick mansion, with its hipped and balustraded roof and central projecting pedimented entry pavilion resembles such pre-Revolutionary American houses as the Chase-Lloyd house in Annapolis. In Providence, however, it was the first of a number of similar and elaborate houses constructed during the period of expansion following the Revolutionary War. Pedimented pavilions, balustraded entrance porches and Palladian doors and windows soon appeared in other houses. The interior of the house is laid out on the classic eighteenth-century plan composed of a broad central hallway, flanked by paired rooms. The major importance of the house is found in the richness of the carving and other interior appointments, including imported french wallpaper.

HISTORY

John Brown was the youngest of three sons of a wealthy prominent Providence family of merchants. In 1771 he left the family firm, probably as a result of his interest in the slave trade, which was strongly opposed by his older brother Moses, a Quaker. One of his ships, the General Washington, was the first Rhode Island vessel to the East Indies and one of the first American ships to sail on Chinese waters.

Brown was an ardent patriot, and was deeply implicated in the Gaspee affair of 1772, a harbinger of the American Revolution. Brown ships supplied gunpowder and war materials for American forces and after the war he was one of the major proponents for bringing a reluctant Rhode Island into the union of states.

When he built his new house on the hill he began the development of open land along southern Benefit Street, which today provides Providence with some of its most beautiful historic houses.

The John Brown House was designed by his brother, Joseph, an amateur architect, also responsible for the First Baptist Meeting House in Providence, another national historic landmark. The house took two years

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Downing, Antoinette F., Early Homes of Rhode Island, Richmond, Va., 1937,
 _____ . "The John Brown House, "Antiques, Vol. LXXXVII, No. 5, May,
 1965.
 Kimball, Fiske, Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the
 Early Republic, New York, 1922.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		UTM	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SE	° ' "	° ' "		19.300300.4632680	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "			° ' "	

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **2 acres**

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **Patricia Heintzelman, Architectural Historian, Landmark Review
 Project, original form prepared by Charles Snell, 1967.**

ORGANIZATION: **Historic Sites Survey** DATE: **2/25/75**

STREET AND NUMBER: **1100 L. Street, N.W.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **D.C.** CODE: **11**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)
 Name _____
 Title _____
 Date _____

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) *mark Nov 24, 1968*
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
 Date _____
 ATTEST: _____
 Keeper of the National Register
 Date _____

7-2-75
7/3/75

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence County	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

7. Description second page

France especially for the house. The busts of Summer and Winter on the entrance gateposts are supposed to have been taken from Versailles during the French Revolution.

The northeast drawing room has semicircular molded arches framing the rectangular windows. The mantel shelf is supported by heavy consoles and has a robust garland frieze. The overmantel is framed by Ionic pilasters which support a broken scrolled pediment with another polychromed bust in the opening.

The southwest chamber mantel has a pediment supported by brackets, and the eared overmantel has scroll ends which rest on the shelf. The frieze is carved with fruit and garland swags.

Eleven of the twelve mantelpieces are original. The two small polychromed busts owned by descendants of the family, one of Milton and one of Athena, were returned, to again become part of the overmantel pediments in the main east drawing rooms. A small squirrel now in the pediment in the southwest parlor is a copy of the original.

Panels from eleven of the wallpapers were saved by family members who lived in the house until 1850 and the Rhode Island Historical Society owns five of them. Light in scale, bright in color, and composed of repeating patterns of classic figures, swags, garlands, urns, rinceau and buds, they were the latest thing from France, thus forming a link between the mid-Georgian character of the architectural detail and the late Chippendale and Hepplewhite furniture.

Although not part of the original building, a lavishly ornamented bathroom with ceramic wall murals, decorative tiles, and stained glass contribute to the overall impression of wealth and opulence.

In 1901 Marsden Perry substituted the present front doorway with its leaded glass fanlight for the old Palladian entry and replaced the door, itself a Victorian replacement, with a handsome mahogany eight-paneled door of proper period design. He also installed ornamental plaster ceilings in the east drawing rooms, and made extensive changes in the northwest room, used most recently for the offices of the Rhode Island Historic Preservation Commission. The interiors have undergone extensive paint analysis and the rooms have been done in gray greens, olive greens, gray, gray blues, and buff tans with some baseboards and windowseats stained in dark mahogany red.

BOUNDARY

The boundary is drawn to include the John Brown House and all property connected with it beginning at the northwest corner at the intersection of Charlesfield Street and Benefit Street, continuing along the south

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence County	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

7. Description third page

curb of Charlesfield Street in an easterly direction to the property line of the residence of the Episcopal Bishop, then following that property line south, east and south again to Power Street, then west along the north curb of Power Street to Benefit Street, then north along the east curb of Benefit Street to the point of beginning as shown on the sketch map.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE	
Rhode Island	
COUNTY	
Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) (Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries) 8. Significance second page

to build, 1786-88. There were originally four outbuildings, a coach house, kitchen, stable, and wood house with bathing house. The first mention of an addition, an ell one story high is noted in an 1841 insurance policy. Sometime between 1860 and 1875, this addition was enlarged and the original round headed windows of the rear wall were made into openings into the ell. Marsden Perry, who bought the house in 1901, substituted the present front doorway and installed ornamental plaster ceilings in the east drawing rooms.

In 1936, John Nicholas Brown bought the building from Perry's estate and donated it to the Rhode Island Historical Society in 1942. The building has been undergoing gradual restoration of the interior and has just been renovated on the exterior. It is used as the offices of the Rhode Island Historical Society which also operates it as a house museum.

