

UP TO DATE 7/77

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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

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

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
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

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DATE

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 finals. 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

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(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

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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

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(NATIONAL HISTORIC
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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.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE			
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian;	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 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			
<p>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.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><u>HISTORY</u></p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p>			

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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.

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	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
SW	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 2 acres						
LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES						
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE			
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE			
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE			
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE			

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Patricia Heintzleman, 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 _____

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Date _____

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

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Mark No. 24, 11/68

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation ... date

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Certified: _____ date

ATTEST: _____ date

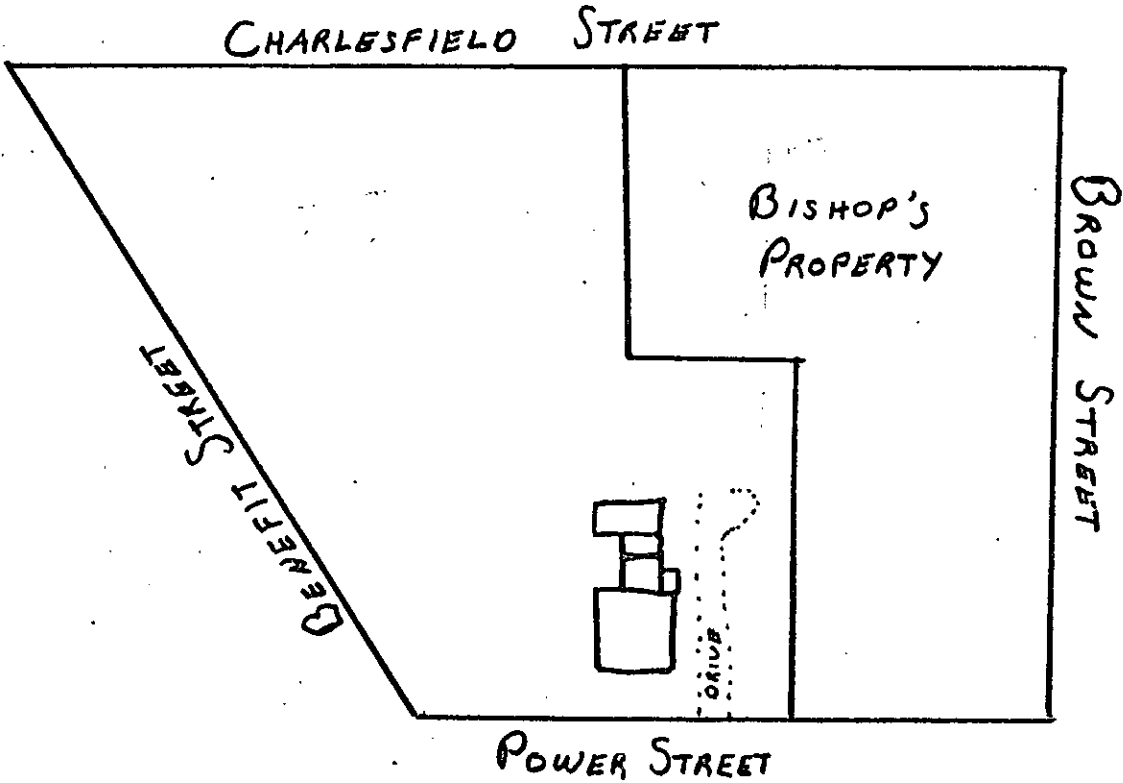
Chief, Hist. & Arch. Surveys

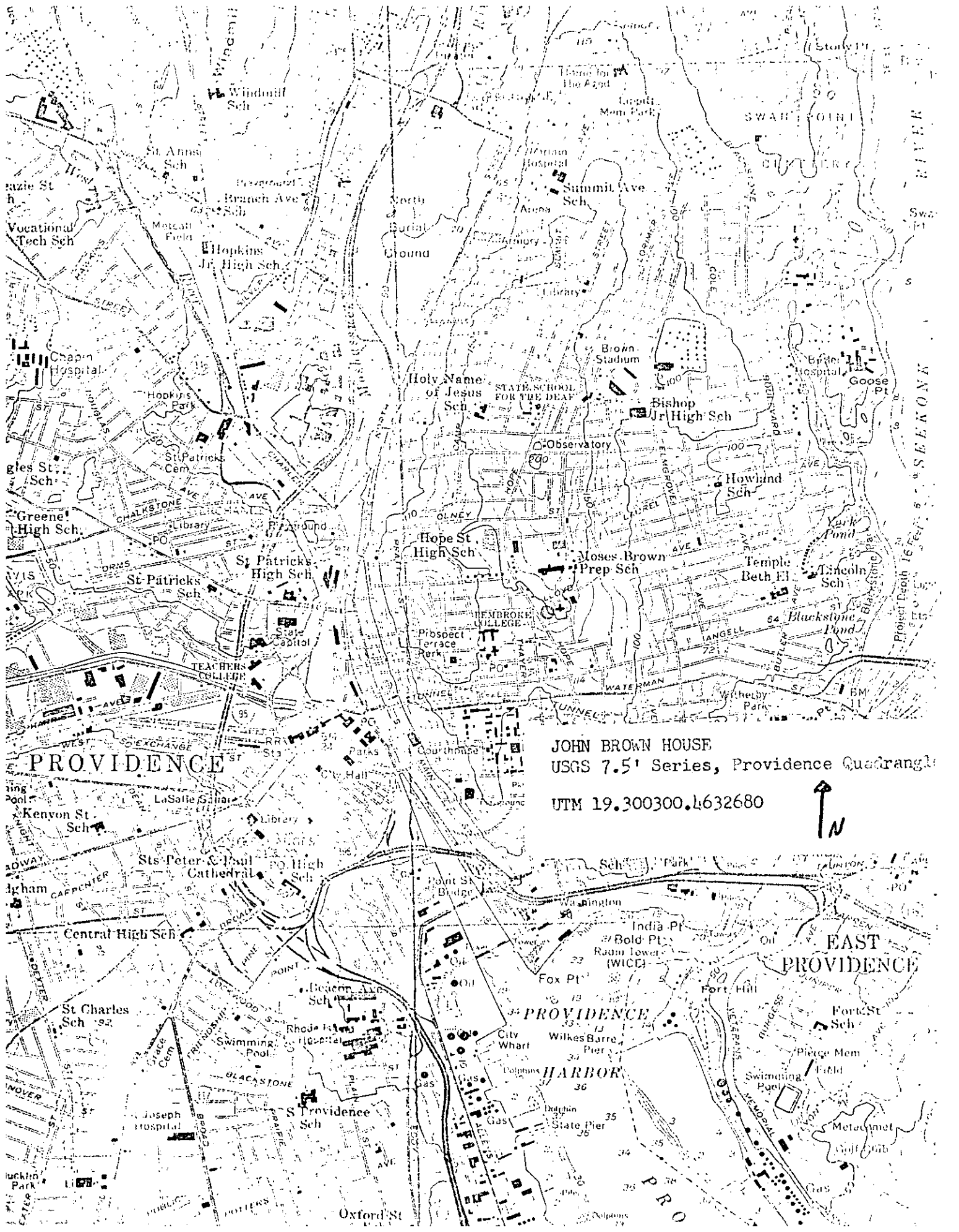
Boundary ...

Keeper of the National Register _____ date

Director, OHP _____ date

SEE INSTRUCTIONS





PROVIDENCE

JOHN BROWN HOUSE
USGS 7.5' Series, Providence Quadrangle
UTM 19.300300.4632680



EAST PROVIDENCE

PROVIDENCE HARBOR

Oxford St

Form 10-347
(Sept. 1967)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE Rhode Island		2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. Theme XX - Architecture (Colonial)	
3. NAME(S) OF SITE John Brown House		4. APPROX. ACREAGE 1 acre	
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) 52 Power Street, and its junction with Benefit Street, Providence, Providence County.			
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) Rhode Island Historical Society, 121 Hope Street, Providence			
7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)			

Designed by the noted amateur architect Joseph Brown, and built in 1786-88, the John Brown House is a magnificent example of a Late Georgian mansion. Constructed at the end of the colonial era and conservative in its design, the Brown House is nevertheless a peer in its style and workmanship with the elaborate Late Georgian mansion that had been built in New York City and Philadelphia 20 years earlier. The Brown House was also the first of a number of similar and elaborate houses that were put up in Providence during the period of expansion following the Revolutionary War. In this house, Joseph Brown's last architectural work, the architect introduced several elements of design that were novel to Rhode Island architecture, but which were not new to the main stream of colonial architecture.

Built for John Brown, a wealthy merchant and brother of the architect, the Brown House is a three-story building with 4 exterior chimneys, massive brick walls and interior brick partitions. Measuring 54 by 50 feet, the large house has a hipped roof with a flat deck that is finished with balustrades at both cornice and deck levels. The lower balustrade is made up of rows of turned balusters alternating with plain block panels, while the balustrade above is of Chinese Chippendale design. The trim is white wood and sandstone is used for the lintels over the windows and also for the columns of the porch. The third story windows are characteristically smaller than those of the lower stories, and are set close under the classic cornice. The facade of the five-bay house is accented by a slightly projecting central pavilion crowned by its own pediment. This treatment, though common elsewhere in the colonies, did not make its appearance in Rhode Island until Joseph Brown first used it for his design of University Hall at Brown University in 1770. The entrance door has side lights and an elliptical

8. BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Give best sources: give location of manuscripts and rare works)

(Continued)

See page 3.

9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, HABS, etc.) Historic American Building Survey: None.			
10. PHOTOGRAPHS* ATTACHED: YES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO <input type="checkbox"/>	11. CONDITION Excellent	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) Museum	13. DATE OF VISIT Sept. 17, 1967
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) Charles W. Snell	15. TITLE Historian	16. DATE Nov. 27, 1967	

* DRY MOUNT ON AN 8 X 10 1/2 SHEET OF FAIRLY HEAVY PAPER. IDENTIFY BY VIEW AND NAME OF THE SITE, DATE OF PHOTOGRAPH, AND NAME OF PHOTOGRAPHER. GIVE LOCATION OF NEGATIVE. IF ATTACHED, ENCLOSE IN PROPER NEGATIVE ENVELOPES.

(IF ADDITIONAL SPACE IS NEEDED USE SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET 10-347a AND REFER TO ITEM NUMBER)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS
SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

This sheet is to be used for giving additional information or comments, for more space for any item on the regular form, and for recording pertinent data from future studies, visitations, etc. Be brief, but use as many Supplement Sheets as necessary. When items are continued they should be listed, if possible, in numerical order of the items. All information given should be headed by the item number, its name, and the word (cont'd), as, 6. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . .

STATE Rhode Island	NAME(S) OF SITE John Brown House
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7. Continued:

fanlight above which embraces both side lights and door. The entranceway is sheltered by a flat-roofed, baluster-crowned entrance porch which is supported by two Doric columns. Above the porch is a large Palladian window that is set under a sandstone relieving arch. On the west (Benefit Street) side of the house there is also a second central, but false, classic doorway which is topped by an angular pediment. On the exterior of this house, particularly in the use of the elliptical fanlight and the flat-roofed balustraded entrance porch, Joseph Brown introduced elements which, though often used in colonial work elsewhere, appeared here for the first time in Rhode Island.

The interior also adheres to the Georgian plan and the four rooms on each floor are divided into pairs by a wide central hall that extends through the house. The interior, however, is decorated with a lavishness seldom met in pre-revolutionary New England Georgian houses. The stairs, with twisted balusters and ramped rail, are located in the usual place at the back of the hall. A pair of engaged columns of the Ionic order, placed opposite each other on either side of the hall, form pedestals for architectural busts designed especially for the house. Paired doorways, with broken, open, and scroll pediments, and a deep cornice ornamented with swags and carving in relief, complete the hall display. The rooms opening off the hall are treated in the same manner, and their walls also have heavily molded base and chair rails and elaborate classic cornices. To the right of the front door is the drawing room, and beyond is the family dining room. At the left is the study, and beyond the formal dining room. The mantels in these rooms are of the elaborate two-story pedimented type.

The large three-story brick service wing at the rear of the main house is a later addition. The house remained in the possession of the Brown family until 1942, when the structure was donated to the Rhode Island Historical Society. Maintained in excellent condition and furnished with period pieces of the 18th century, the house is open to visitors.

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

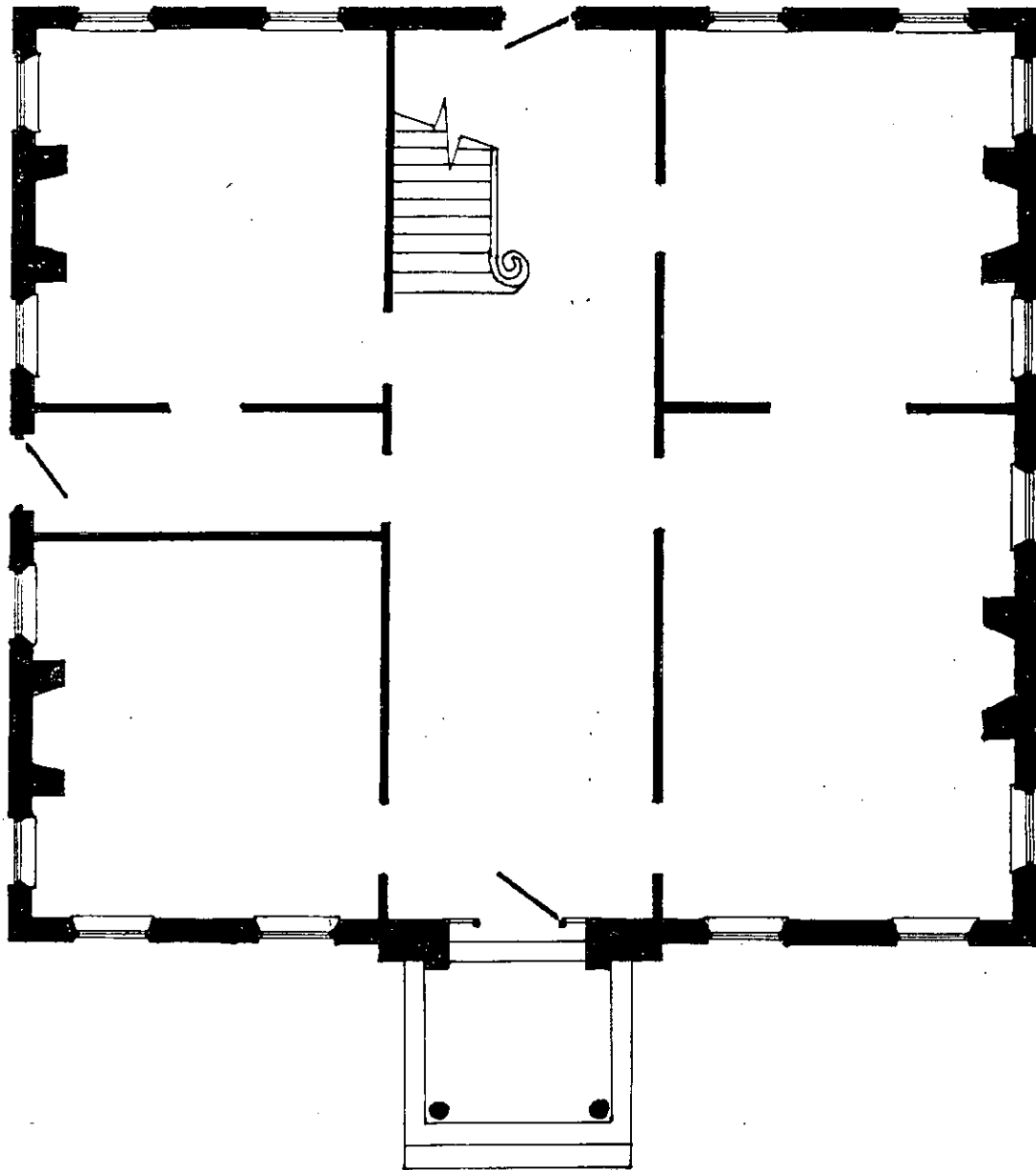
NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS
SUPPLEMENTARY SHEET

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6. Description and Importance (cont'd) . . . Page 3.

STATE Rhode Island	NAME(S) OF SITE John Brown House
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8. References:

Dorothy and Richard Pratt, A Guide to Early American Homes--North (New York, 1956), 92 ; Rhode Island, A Guide to the Smallest State (American Guide Series) (Boston, 1937), 279 ; Antoinette F. Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Va., 1937), 285-297; Fiske Kimball, Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic (New York, 1922), 174, 210, 220, 259, 291



John Brown House, 1786-88
52 Power Street, Providence, Rhode Island
Schematic original plan

