

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

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

1. NAME

COMMON: Prackett (Charles) House
AND/OR HISTORIC: Corliss (George H.) House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 45, Prospect Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Providence			
STATE Rhode Island	CODE 38	COUNTY: Providence	CODE 007

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public <input type="checkbox"/>	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/>	Occupied <input type="checkbox"/>	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>
Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/>	Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	In Process <input type="checkbox"/>	Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Object <input type="checkbox"/>	Both <input type="checkbox"/>	Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/>	Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/>	Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/>
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)				
Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/>	Government <input type="checkbox"/>	Park <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/>	Comments <input type="checkbox"/>
Commercial <input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial <input type="checkbox"/>	Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
Educational <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>	Religious <input type="checkbox"/>	rear wing used	
Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/>	Museum <input type="checkbox"/>	Scientific <input type="checkbox"/>	as offices	

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME: Estate of Charles Brackett and Brown University			
STREET AND NUMBER: Prospect Street at College Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Providence	STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 38	STATE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Recorder of Deeds, City Hall			
STREET AND NUMBER: Dorrance Street at Washington Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Providence	STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 38	COUNTY:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: College Hill Demonstration Grant Study. Project R. I., D--1.			
DATE OF SURVEY: 1959	Federal <input type="checkbox"/>	State <input type="checkbox"/>	County <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Providence Redevelopment Agency			
STREET AND NUMBER: 10, Dorrance Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Providence	STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 38	ENTRY NUMBER DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:
COUNTY:
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7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The present appearance of the house is entirely its original one. It is, in its main portion, of three full storeys above a low basement, with a corner tower of four full storeys; at the rear is a service wing of two diminished storeys over a basement, through which runs a ramp or tunnel serving as porte-cochère. Attached to a corner of the service wing is a two-storey stable block forming a rear courtyard. The massing of the main house and its projections is asymmetrical, in the "Italian Villa" style, employed monumentally.

Construction is of brick with brown sandstone trim (entrance porch, terrace, window sills and lintels, balconies etc.), cornices and some minor appendages being of wood. The various roof areas are of painted metal and are of hipped form with surmounting balustrades (one hipped area conceals, however, a sizeable roof terrace with observation platforms). Windows are mostly double-hung, 1 over 1 of large plate glass, and are square-headed except for the third storey, where they are segmental-headed.

Interior trim throughout the many rooms is elaborate and varied, displaying moulded and carved wood, marble mantels, a variety of applied wall treatments, of hardware and lighting fixtures. One or two reception rooms "done over" near the turn of the century were in 1929 restored to a correct Victorian appearance.

With the exception of very small areas of damage due to minor leakage or cracks in plaster, the house remains inside and outside in practically pristine condition, having had, ever since its construction and to this moment, the most thorough and careful maintenance and repair.

Considering the date of its construction, c. 1875 ff., the house is perhaps slightly retardataire in its surface design or style, but this seems to have been a definite choice of the owner-architect.

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) 1875--c. 1882

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

The permanent significance, importance and interest of this house are spread over several areas--the chief one of which is its place as a remaining example of American XIX Century architectural history and taste. In that respect it is important in New England, and also well beyond it, for there remain anywhere very few very formally and monumentally treated durable masonry examples of the "Italian (Tuscan) Villa" style. This large example, upon which expense was not spared, stands intact externally; the interior is also preserved, with its parade of Victorian décor, luxury, equipment and convenience. (~~The furniture is likely to leave the house, but it is perhaps only incidental to the decorated rooms.~~) The house will be greatly rewarding to any historian or collegian making a study and even to the travelling sightseer making a passing inspection.

Second, the house by its character, size and particular siting (high on an embankment on an important street-corner) fills a special function as a landscape and cityscape "anchor" to its locale--its adjacent buildings and spaces. These include XVIII and XIX Century residences, a "Gothic" octagonal domed library of Brown University, a modern dormitory complex of the Rhode Island School of Design. It very perceptibly is a cornerstone of its entire surroundings and it defines one boundary of the Brown campus. From more distant points of view it is a towering landmark of Providence's high East Side.

Third is the matter of close association with a personality of note: George Corliss was a figure of genius and importance in the industrialisation and mechanisation of this country. This is the house he planned, designed for himself in his success and prosperity--to include, within the exterior of his choice, all the comfort and convenience of living, all the modern apparatus and devices he could envisage. Though other persons no doubt were asked to handle the more fussy details of interior decoration, the house importantly is the product of both the aesthetic and practical, or mechanical, sides of a great and inventive mind.

Brown University, as designated recipient of this house, hopefully will realise the cultural significance of its possession and will accord it both the sympathetic use and careful maintenance it deserves.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS
has left

can it be
an example
of 19th history
was

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence	
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(Number all entries)

8. Significance.

In addition to producing the over-all architectural design of his house, George Corliss also incorporated into it engineering innovations which reflect the extraordinary inventive character of the owner.

This dwelling stands as a landmark in housing history and improvement, being possibly the first one in America to be warmed by radiant heat, thermostatically controlled: In the stable complex adjoining the house Corliss installed a steam boiler and a small version of his famous steam engine. This engine drove a fan which sent air, through steam-heated ducts, through a tunnel and into the main house. There the heated air was distributed through ducts built into the walls, thus heating all rooms by radiation from their walls. These wall ducts all collected in the attic, from which the air was returned to the stable and re-circulated in order to conserve and re-use any heat which it still contained.

This heating (i. e., the steam engine effecting its distribution) was controlled by a thermostat--surely one of the earliest known--located in the main hall of the house. On the ceiling of this hall and running its full length was a rod of metal alloy which expanded and contracted markedly with changes in the house temperature. Through mechanical linkage, this rod regulated a governor on the engine driving the fan, and this regulated the flow of warmed air to the radiant heating duct-work of the house.

(Besides the above heating arrangements, Corliss made his own designs for other conveniences in his house, such as an hydraulic elevator, concealed sliding insect screens for windows etc.)

Following the death of Corliss's daughter--who evidently understood this remarkable heating system but failed to pass her knowledge on--later heirs and their maintenance contractors could discover no visible heating system at all. They were then accustomed to central heating through conspicuous steam radiators and consequently installed such a system throughout the house. The workmen employed in doing this also did not perceive the older system and so left its elements largely intact, as it still is except for some comparatively recent dismantling and alteration of the stable area.

What Corliss designed for this house was a first-of-its-kind in centrally generated, radiant heating and an unique example of XIX Century inventiveness, direct from the mind of a man who was a monumental personality in the technological progress of that era.

William Slater Allen,
Registered Professional Engineer.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Cady, John Hutchins: The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence, 1636-1950 (Providence, R. I., The Book Shop, 1957), pp. 155-156, 171 (the illustration shown is erroneously not of the Corliss House but of a demolished neighbouring one).

Providence City Plan Commission: College Hill Demonstration Grant Study. Project R. I., D--1 (Providence, R. I., 1959, and 2nd ed., 1967), p. 67.

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 ONE ACRE		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "		41	49	10.0 N
NE	° ' "	° ' "		71	24	19.2 W
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

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:
Richard B. Harrington

ORGANIZATION: Rhode Island State Historical Preservation Commission DATE: Sept. 20, 1969

STREET AND NUMBER:
24, Meeting Street,

CITY OR TOWN: Providence STATE: Rhode Island CODE: 38

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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:

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

COUNTY Providence	
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(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Brackett (Charles) House

AND/OR HISTORIC: Corliss (George H.) House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

115, Prospect Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Providence

STATE:

Rhode Island

CODE

38

COUNTY:

Providence

CODE

007

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: Richard B. Harrington

DATE OF PHOTO: c. 1955

NEGATIVE FILED AT:

Richard B. Harrington, 23, James Street, Providence, R. I.

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

exterior seen from south-west



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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COMMON: Brackett (Charles) House			
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2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: 15, Prospect Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Providence			
STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 38	COUNTY: Providence	CODE 007
3. PHOTO REFERENCE			
PHOTO CREDIT: Brown University Photographic Laboratory			
DATE OF PHOTO: 1961			
NEGATIVE FILED AT: Brown University Photographic Laboratory, Providence, R. I.			
4. IDENTIFICATION			
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. drawing-room, looking east to music-room			



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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STATE
Rhode I
COUNTY
Provide
FOR M
ENTRY N

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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AND/OR HISTORIC: Corliss (George H.) House

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45, Prospect Street

CITY OR TOWN:

Providence

STATE:

Rhode Island

CODE

38

COUNTY:

Providence

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: Brown University Photographic Laboratory

DATE OF PHOTO: 1961

NEGATIVE FILED AT:

Brown University Photographic Laboratory, Providence,

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

first-floor hall, looking east



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DATE OF PHOTO: c. 1955			
NEGATIVE FILED AT: Richard B. Harrington, 23, James Street, Providence, R. I.			
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DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. exterior seen from north-west			



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DATE OF PHOTO: 1961

NEGATIVE FILED AT:

Brown University Photographic Laboratory, Providence, R. I. *

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DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

principal bedroom, looking north



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3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: Brown University Photographic Laboratory
DATE OF PHOTO: 1961
NEGATIVE FILED AT:
Brown University Photographic Laboratory, Providence, R. I.

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.
principal bedroom, looking south



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PHOTO CREDIT: Brown University Photographic Laboratory			
DATE OF PHOTO: 1961			
NEGATIVE FILED AT: Brown University Photographic Laboratory, Providence, R. I.			
4. IDENTIFICATION			
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. library, looking south-east and showing dining-room beyond			



Charles Brackett/George H. Corliss House
Latitude: 41° 49' 34"
Longitude: 71° 24' 21"