

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
(NATIONAL HISTORIC INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM  
LANDMARKS)

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

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

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Vernon House

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Vernon House

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
46 Clarke Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Newport 1st. Congressional District

STATE Rhode Island	CODE 44	COUNTY: Newport	CODE 005
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**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	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	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Mrs. Quinto Maganini

STREET AND NUMBER:  
"Montrose" Calhoun Drive

CITY OR TOWN: Greenwich	STATE: Rhode Island	CODE: 44
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**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Newport City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Washington Square

CITY OR TOWN: Newport	STATE: Rhode Island	CODE: 44
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**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey (3 photos)

DATE OF SURVEY: 1937  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Division of Prints and Photographs

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Library of Congress/Annex

CITY OR TOWN: Washington	STATE: D.C.	CODE: 11
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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_

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 Vernon House is a two story frame building with a low hipped roof surmounted by a balustraded walk. The three dormers on the front facade are topped by segmental pediments; the two dormers on each end have triangular pediments and the three on the rear have triangular pediments on the ends and a segmental one in the center. The exterior walls are given a rusticated woodblock treatment sanded during painting to achieve a roughcast effect simulating ashlar masonry. The scoring is handled to create the effect of flat arches above the lower windows and doors. A wooden beltcourse is also provided to complete the very successful illusion of a stone building. The doorway is framed by a well proportioned full Doric cornice and frieze, supported by square plain Doric pilasters. The rear door has a similar frontispiece, smaller in scale with a large round-headed window above which lights the stairlanding.

The interior, as altered in 1759, has the typical Georgian floor plan of a central hall with two rooms opening off either side on each floor. The wide hall is wainscoted with fielded paneling and has a molded cornice. An elliptical arch resting on large consoles is decorated with foliate insets in the spandrels. It serves as a frame for the graceful curve of the stair's banister with its elaborately twisted balusters.

When the house was enlarged by Bowler he installed paneled mantel breasts and wainscoted all four walls of the north parlor as well as a dentiled cornice and a two story overmantel with broken scroll pediment. The proportions of the overmantel are too large for the room and it seems to have been brought from another house. The dining room in the northeast corner is also wainscoted with fielded paneling and has a deep molded cornice.

In 1937, frescos of a Chinese character were discovered under the wall paneling in the northwest room. They were painted directly on smooth plaster, above the lower part painted to simulated wood paneling of the bolection type. Molding, stiles, and rails were carefully depicted, then marbled, with panel faces reserved for pictorial scenes. These panels are rare scenes which indicate a knowledge of the cycle of Buddhist Hell and Chinese court punishments. Upstairs in the northwest room another original painting of a West Indies scene was found behind the mantel breast in 1879 during repairs. It was removed and subsequently disappeared.

The window on the stair landing is a single round-headed opening with side paneling to simulate a Palladian window. The upper hall itself has a modillioned cornice and paneled wainscoting. The upper rooms have exposed summer beams, encased in paneling. In a similar manner the plates (supports for the roof) are exposed and given a narrow molding to act as the room cornices.

BOUNDARY

The Vernon House is located at the northeast corner of the intersection

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS)

(Continuation Sheet)

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

(Number all entries)

7. Description second page

of Clarke and Mary Streets, enclosed by a fence on a low stone wall which defines the boundary, beginning at the northwest corner on Clarke Street, the line runs east along the south boundary of the adjoining property (currently owned by Juliette Mary Giard) to the northeast corner at the property line, then south along the rear or west boundaries of the properties on Spring Street, (currently owned by Clyde W. Tartar and Edward B. Ward), to the north curb of Mary Street, then west along Mary Street to the east curb of Clarke Street, then north on Clarke Street to the point of beginning, as described in the deed registered on January 22, 1965 in the Newport City Hall.

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): c. 1700 1758

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/Phi-  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry    | losophy                                 | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention   | <input type="checkbox"/> Science        | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape   | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | Architecture                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human-  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature  | itarian                                 | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military    | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater        | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music       | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Vernon House, Newport, Rhode Island, is one of the city's most interesting buildings representing two periods of style. In the older section of the house, unusual wall murals were discovered which depict Chinese scenes of the Buddhist cycle. These probably date from the second quarter of the eighteenth century but this section itself dates from around the turn of the century. In 1759 a hall and rooms to the south were added to bring the building to its present appearance of a two story frame Georgian mansion, rusticated and sanded to imitate ashlar masonry with a wide classic doorway, modillioned and dentiled cornice, and a low hipped roof with flat balustraded deck. As completed the house exhibits the most academic proportions of any colonial house still standing in Newport. The Newport architect, Peter Harrison, designer of the Redwood Library and Brick Market, is often mentioned in connection with the Vernon House. Its horizontality and the impression of mass created by the heavy rustication hint at a Renaissance palazzo, creating an imposing colonial residence of great dignity and importance.

HISTORY

William Gibbs, a painter, owned a house on the site of the Vernon House in 1708 and evidence of the frame of the northern half indicates it belongs to the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. The Gibbs-Gardner family owned the house until 1744. Two fragmentary deeds list Patrick Grant and Charles Bowler as subsequent owners. Bowler probably bought the house in 1753 when he became Collector of Revenue. In 1759 Bowler sold the property to his son, Metcalf, a successful merchant in the West India trade. Metcalf was active in local politics. Appointed as Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court in 1776, he retained the post for a year while doubling as a secret agent for the British Crown. In Stiles map of 1758 the house is shown as two stories with one chimney, half the size of today's house. When he bought the house, Metcalf added the present hall and rooms on the south, transforming the structure into its current appearance.

In 1773 Bowler sold the house to William Vernon, a successful merchant and ardent patriot. When the French arrived in Newport in 1780, General Rochambeau was quartered in the house.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(NATIONAL HISTORIC  
LANDMARKS) (Continuation Sheet)

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

(Number all entries)

8. Significance second page

The house remained in the Vernon family until 1872 when it was purchased at auction by Harwood Read. In 1912, the Charity Organization Society, in order to save Rochambeau's headquarters, bought the house and made a partial restoration of it. It served as the headquarters of the Family Service Society until 1966 when it was purchased by Mrs. Quinto Maganini, who uses it as a private residence.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Downing, Antoinette F., Early Homes of Rhode Island, Richmond Va., 1937.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ and Scully, Vincent J. Jr., The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, 1640-1915, Cambridge, Mass., 1967.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	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	° ' "	° ' "		° ' "	° ' "	
				19.306830.4595390		

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: .3 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

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: 1/23/75

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

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

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 (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Nov 24, 1968  
 Designated: \_\_\_\_\_

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Cornelius Heine 7-2-75  
 Certified: \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Chief, Hist. & Arch. Surveys  
 ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

Boundery Affirmed: 7/3/75  
Olaf Uelex Jensen  
 Keeper of The National Register  
 Director, OHP date \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

Form 10-317  
(Sept. 1957)

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL SURVEY OF HISTORIC SITES AND BUILDINGS

1. STATE <b>Rhode Island</b>	2. THEME(S). IF ARCHEOLOGICAL SITE, WRITE "ARCH" BEFORE THEME NO. <b>Theme XX - Architecture (Colonial)</b>
3. NAME(S) OF SITE <b>Vernon House</b>	4. APPROX. ACREAGE <b>.2 acres</b>
5. EXACT LOCATION (County, township, roads, etc. If difficult to find, sketch on Supplementary Sheet) <b>46 Clarke Street, at its junction with Mary Street, Newport, Newport County.</b>	
6. NAME AND ADDRESS OF PRESENT OWNER (Also administrator if different from owner) <b>Preservation Society of Newport County, 5 Charles Street, Newport</b>	
7. IMPORTANCE AND DESCRIPTION (Describe briefly what makes site important and what remains are extant)	

Built in 1758, the Vernon House is a good example of academically correct Late Georgian domestic architecture.

Constructed by Metcalf Bowler, who later became Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court, the house was acquired by William Vernon, a wealthy merchant and shipowner, in 1773 and remained in the possession of the Vernon family until 1872. During the Revolution the Vernon House was headquarters for the French general, Count de Rochambeau, while his army was in Newport, July 1780 to June, 1781.

The Vernon House is a two-and-a-half story frame structure with a hipped roof that is surmounted by a captain's walk or balustrade. The three dormers on the five-bay front facade are topped by segmental pediments and the two dormers on each end have triangular pediments. The cornice is of the modillion and dentil type. The exterior walls are given a rusticated woodblock treatment; the central entrance has a flat pediment with frieze and is flanked by two Doric pilasters.

The house has usual Georgian floor plan of <sup>a</sup> structure with two interior chimneys: two large rooms open off either side of the central hall on each floor. The wide hall is wainscoted and divided by a foliated, bracketed arch. The stairs, set far at the back, have twisted balusters, ramped wall paneling and rail, and a Palladian window at the landing. The north parlor (to the left of the hall) is paneled from floor to ceiling, the windows have paneled shutters and deep seats, and the mantel is crowned with a broken-scroll pediment. The paneling of the two outer walls of the room was removed and revealed curious wall paintings of several widely

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

(Continued)

See page 2.

9. REPORTS AND STUDIES (Mention best reports and studies, as, NPS study, HABS, etc.)

**Historic American Building Survey: (3 photos, 1937).**

10. PHOTOGRAPHS #1262-65 ATTACHED <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES <input type="checkbox"/> NO	11. CONDITION <b>Fair</b>	12. PRESENT USE (Museum, farm, etc.) <b>Museum</b>	13. DATE OF VISIT <b>Sept. 18, 1967</b>
14. NAME OF RECORDER (Signature) <i>Charles W. Snell</i> <b>Charles W. Snell</b>	15. TITLE <b>Historian</b>	16. DATE <b>Nov. 22, 1967</b>	

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, 10-317a, 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, Description and Importance (cont'd) . . .

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

Dorothy and Richard Pratt, A Guide to Early American Homes--North (New York, 1956), 99; Rhode Island, A Guide to the Smallest State (American Guide Series) (Boston, 1937), 226; Antoinette F. Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Va., 1937), 234-238, 250-257; Antoinette F. Downing and Vincent J. Scully, Jr., The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, 1640-1915 (Cambridge, 1952); James G. VanDerPool, "Historical Development of Architecture in the U.S.A., 1632-1912," (N.P.S. Ms., 1966), 82 ;

7. Continued:

differing styles, including a panel of flower paintings and several large panels of paintings showing a strong Chinese influence. Other rooms in the house also have fine paneling and some had paper hangings on the walls.

The Vernon House was used as the headquarters of the Family Service Society from 1912 to 1966. In fair condition, the structure is now being renovated and will be opened as a historic house museum.



