

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



1983

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic Isabella Breckinridge House or "River House"

and/or common Breckinridge Public Affairs Center

## 2. Location

street & number 170 U.S. 1  
~~Route One~~ N/A not for publication

city, town York  vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Maine code 23 county York code 031

## 3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> In process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name Bowdoin College

street & number

city, town Brunswick  vicinity of Maine

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. York County Registry of Deeds

street & number

city, town Alfred, state Maine

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  N/A yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Isabella Breckinridge House is an early 20<sup>th</sup> century summer villa, combining Colonial and Mediterranean Revival elements. The house stands in approximately 20 secluded, landscaped acres between Route One and the York River, just outside York Village. Only with difficulty can the building be seen from the road.

The shape of the house is a broad "H". A two-and-one-half story central portion with hipped roof and Dutch gable ends adjoins two-story, flat-roofed wings. The entrance door, in the center of the main portion's facade, is surrounded by a portico with concave roof and wrought-iron supports whose design mimics Georgian roof-fencing. Two bays of rectangular windows stand to either side of the portico, and three dormers with arched windows punctuate the roof above. The two wings are likewise symmetrical in fenestration, and the two second-story windows of each have small wrought-iron balconies.

The facade elevation is masked by tall, wall-like hedges which turn outward to form an enclosed courtyard before the central portion. Entrance to the courtyard is had from openings in the hedge to either side.

All wall surfaces are of whitewashed brick. The only attempt at surface ornament are flat arches above the windows and a raised brick band between floors. The walls facing the courtyard are vine covered. Otherwise, there is little external decoration.

The house's rear elevation, mirroring that of the facade, looks unimpeded to the nearby York River. The wing's first-floor rear portions are faced with banks of Colonial Revival arched windows. A small ornamental garden sits at the house's north-east corner.

The rooms are generally spacious and variously decorated, but the centrally located entrance hall is surprisingly small. The entrance hall and second-floor hallways are Mediterranean in decoration, having imitation stucco walls and tile floors. The main staircase has a thin wrought-iron bannister.

The first floor of the left-hand wing is occupied by servant's quarters, kitchens (2), and a pantry. To the rear of the wing is a large breakfast room with six arched walk-out windows facing the river.

The first floor of the right-hand wing includes the "Green Room" (a large living room), the main dining room, and a sun room identical in demeanor to the breakfast room of the opposite wing.

The dining room is the most interestingly apportioned, having an octagonal-tiled floor, Colonial Revival fireplace, and mural wallpaper displaying exotic scenery and architecture from around the world. The romantic eclecticism of the wallpaper echoes that of the house's architecture, interior decoration, and furniture, which includes pieces from numerous countries and periods.

The second floor is primarily bedrooms (12), but includes a library and sitting room. Only two bedrooms have been remodelled in a contemporary fashion. Fireplace mantels, doors, and moldings are surprisingly plain and most are of unpainted wood. Most windows are multi-paned.

The third floor of the main portion is a billiards room with windows facing rear and forward. Half of the room is presently used as a conference room.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1905/27 **Builder/Architect** Guy Lowell

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Isabella Breckinridge House (or "River House") is among the major early twentieth century summer estates in York County. Villas of such large dimension appear only occasionally in Maine outside of Mt. Desert Island. The Breckinridge House is particularly rare in incorporating Colonial Revival features into an Italian villa plan.

The house was originally built in 1905 from plans by Boston architect Guy Lowell, and combined a Mediterranean villa configuration with a mansard-roofed main portion. Gutted by fire in the mid-1920's, its charred brick walls were painted white and the interior reconstructed in 1927. The exterior of the central portion was somewhat altered, a neo-Georgian gambrel roof with Dutch straight-edged gables replacing the mansard. It is not known whether Lowell was architect for the remodelling (1927 was the year of his death).

Guy Lowell was a prominent East Coast architect and designed a number of Bar Harbor villas, most notably Eegonos (1907)(National Register, 1/15/80), the Mediterranean Beaux-Arts palace of Walter G. Ladd.

Mrs. Isabella Breckinridge, née Goodrich, was the daughter of B. F. Goodrich, the rubber magnate. Her husband, John Cabell Breckinridge, III, was the son of the noted Kentucky senator, Confederate General and Secretary of War, Presidential candidate, and U. S. Vice President of the same name. The house passed through the female line of succession to Mrs. Mary Patterson who donated it to Bowdoin College reserving residential rights. For a portion of each summer the building presently houses the Breckinridge Public Affairs Center of Bowdoin College. Mrs. Patterson uses the house for the remainder of the season.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Tides of Time: A Tour of Seacoast Houses, To Benefit Maine and New  
New Hampshire Bloodbanks, 1968.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property  $\frac{1}{2}$

Quadrangle name York Harbor

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A 

1	1	9	3	6	2	6	1	9	1	0	4	1	7	7	1	7	6	1	1	0
Zone			Easting						Northing											

B 

Zone			Easting						Northing											

C 

Zone			Easting						Northing											

D 

Zone			Easting						Northing											

E 

Zone			Easting						Northing											

F 

Zone			Easting						Northing											

G 

Zone			Easting						Northing											

H 

Zone			Easting						Northing											

Verbal boundary description and justification

Assessor's Map 67, Lot 4

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Gregory K. Clancey, Contract Assistant / Frank A. Beard, Historian

organization Me. Historic Preservation Comm. date January, 1983

street & number 55 Capitol Street telephone 207/289-2133

city or town Augusta, state Maine 04333

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Eric S. [Signature]*

title S.H.P.O. date 3/22/83

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date 4/28/83

*[Signature]*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration