

DH0359009

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAR 12 1976
DATE ENTERED OCT 22 1976

**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

Malbone

Malbone

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Malbone Road

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Newport

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Rhode Island

__VICINITY OF

(1st St. Germain)

CODE

44

COUNTY

Newport

CODE

005

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

__DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

__STRUCTURE

__SITE

__OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

__PUBLIC

PRIVATE

__BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

__IN PROCESS

__BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

__UNOCCUPIED

__WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

__YES: RESTRICTED

__YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

__AGRICULTURE

__COMMERCIAL

__EDUCATIONAL

__ENTERTAINMENT

__GOVERNMENT

__INDUSTRIAL

__MILITARY

__MUSEUM

__PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

__RELIGIOUS

__SCIENTIFIC

__TRANSPORTATION

__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mrs. Lewis Gouverneur Morris

STREET & NUMBER

Malbone Road

CITY, TOWN

Newport

STATE

Rhode Island

__VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Newport City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

Broadway

CITY, TOWN

Newport

STATE

Rhode Island

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1973

FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D. C.

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<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

Malbone is a notable example of an early Victorian country estate. Built for J. Prescott Hall in 1848-1849, it was designed by A. J. Davis in the "Pointed Style" of the Gothic Revival which he commonly favored. The house is located in elaborately landscaped grounds on or near the site of Colonel Godfrey Malbone's renowned colonial residence (burned in 1766) from which the present property takes its name. Malbone was remodeled and enlarged on several occasions in the nineteenth century, with each change increasing its importance and interest.

The house consists of a two-and-a-half story main block, two rooms deep, with a story-and-a-half wing, one room deep, extending to the north. It is sited facing east and is constructed of vermiculated brownstone with smooth ashlar trim. The main block measures forty-four feet deep by thirty-four feet wide and has a gable-breaking-gable roof and two interior chimneys topped by triple tile pots. The northern wing is two bays wide with peaked gables over each projecting bay unit.

The eastern or main facade is composed of three widely spaced bays flanked by two hexagonal towers at the corners. The northern tower is non-functional, rises two-and-a-half stories, and was added for picturesque effect. The larger, southern, tower contains a stair and has windows on three levels. The corners of both towers are accentuated by slightly protruding stones, and both towers are capped by crenelations. The central bay of this facade contains double entrance doors fronted by an arcaded porch with Gothic colonettes. Above the doorway is a semi-hexagonal wooden bay window with sawn Gothic details and vertical, diamond-paned sash. A circular window divided into four sections ornaments the central gable peak.

The southern or garden side is the least symmetrical elevation. This two-bay facade is composed of a one-story porch to the right and a wide, two-story, semi-hexagonal bay window to the left. The large corner stair tower, now at the right, stands out from the wall to which it is attached. The double-level bay window to the left counterbalances this corner tower. Low, pointed pediments, different from those of the main facade, cap the windows of this elevation. The rear or western facade of the main block is distinguished by a one-story porch of sawn trellis-like piers and Tudor-arched trusses along its length.

(See Cont. Sheet 1)

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 checked="" 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/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1849 (north wing by 1859) BUILDER/ARCHITECT A. J. Davis

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Five aspects of Malbone's history deserve particular attention. First, the legend of Godfrey Malbone's magnificent colonial mansion survives in the present 1849 structure. The mid-nineteenth century house is important as a major example of the Gothic Revival style as designed by a nationally prominent architect, A. J. Davis. The grounds show an evolution in styles of landscape gardening while maintaining the basic formal character of the original eighteenth century garden. The families that have occupied Malbone were locally and nationally prominent and representative of the changing social history of Newport, Rhode Island. Finally, the estate, throughout its more than two-century history, informs the evolution of the aristocratic or upper-class country seat in America.

The first residence at Malbone was begun in 1741. Godfrey Malbone's country house was probably designed by Richard Munday, architect of Trinity Church (1726), the Colony House (1739), and possibly Malbone's city residence (c. 1728), all in Newport. The country house, reported to have cost £ 20,000, had a double-pitched roof, dormer windows, a crowning cupola; as one visitor recorded, "the sides of the windows and the corner stones of the house... (were) painted like white marble." Godfrey Malbone was born in Virginia, but came to Newport around 1720 and married Margaret Scott. Through the West Indian trade and privateering, he became one of Newport's richest citizens; his house displayed the opulence characteristic of wealthy colonial Newporters. When Dr. Alexander Hamilton visited the house in 1744, he rated it the most magnificent dwelling he had seen in his American travels, although he called it "a clumsy Dutch Model." Unfortunately, the house was destroyed by fire on June 7, 1766. Never rebuilt, the property lay abandoned but remained a source of local interest and legend.

When J. Prescott Hall purchased the Malbone property in the 1840's, he chose his fellow New Yorker, A. J. Davis, to rebuild the house. Davis' reputation as an accomplished country house designer was already well established by numerous commissions and published designs. In partnership with Ithiel Town, Davis had early gained

(See Cont. Sheet 3)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See continuation sheet page # 8)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 19

UTM REFERENCES

DA	1,9	3 0,7 0,3 0	4,5 9,7 5,3 0	NE	AB	1,9	3 0,7 2,5 3	4,5 9,7 5,2 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
B	1,9	3 0,7 2,6 0	4,5 9,7 1,5 5		CA	1,9	3 0,7 0,3 5	4,5 9,7 1,5 0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Starting at a point 200 feet north of the intersection of Malbone Road and Garfield Street, the southern boundary runs due west for 600 feet, then due north for 1,160 feet, then due east 450 feet to Malbone Road, then south along Malbone Road to the original point.

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

Keith N. Morgan and Timothy T. More

ORGANIZATION

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

DATE

2/18/76

STREET & NUMBER

150 Benefit Street

TELEPHONE

(401) 277-2678

CITY OR TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island

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

Frederick C. Williams

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE March 2, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 10/22/90

ATTEST:

DATE 10-20-76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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Irregularities in the material of the main block indicate an interesting evolution for the building. A distinct change in the size and texture of stone at the middle of the second story suggests that some of the shell as well as some of the building material from Godfrey Malbone's eighteenth-century house was reused by Davis. Colonel Malbone had imported a pinkish-brown sandstone from his quarries in Brooklyn, Connecticut, and references verify that the ruin was not pulled down after the 1766 fire. The heavy segmented arches of the first story windows, when contrasted with the delicately-detailed labels above the second-story windows, add further weight to the evidence of earlier lower walls.

Davis' plan for the first floor of the central block consisted of five rooms: two 16' by 18' rooms flanking a 16' by 14' central hall across the front and a double parlor across the back (each section 18' by 24'). Except for changes in the stairhall and the addition of the wing to the north by 1859, Davis' plan remains unchanged. Subsequent owners, however, lavishly redecorated and refurnished the house on several occasions.

The original staircase was located in the southern half of the righthand front room; Davis commonly separated the staircase from the main entrance hall. In 1875, Henry Bedlow, the second owner of the house, commissioned Dudley Newton to redesign the hall and stairway. Newton merged the original hall with the room to the north and placed a monumental staircase at a right angle to the entrance. The new staircase descends in one broad flight and ends in a series of flared and curved steps. Its rail consists of solid panels with carved Gothic detail and terminates in ornately-carved square newels. This staircase is sophisticated in design but is somewhat overwhelming even in the enlarged front hall. Unpainted wood beams in the ceiling and in the other woodwork of the hall and a crocketed mantel, complete the Gothic theme of the stairhall.

The south front room is a small library containing a Gothic Revival bookcase ornamented with crockets and colonettes and fronted by glass doors with lancet muntins. These cases were purchased early in this century by Lewis Gouverneur Morris, the fourth owner of the house, and were taken from "Shady Lawn," a Ludlow family house on the Hudson River.

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To the rear of the main block, the double parlor is reached through Tudor arched doors from the hall and library into the southern parlor. This room's light blue walls, trimmed in white with details picked out in gold, contrast sharply with the dark woodwork of the hall. Here Gothic detail is restricted to the mantel and the Tudor-arched doors and windows. The northern room of the double parlor is hung with crimson wallpaper and is further darkened by the verandah along its western wall. The Davis mantel in this parlor was replaced, probably in the 1870's, by an elaborate eclectic design. The fireplace opening is flanked by stylized Ionic pilasters supporting a classically-detailed mantel shelf. Above, a large mirror is surrounded by effusively-designed armorial-Elizabethan and Neo-Grecque detail. Both parlors have geometric molded plaster ceilings.

The northern wing was added by Prescott Hall within a decade of the construction of the main block. It was designed to serve as a library. In 1875, Henry Bedlow commissioned Dudley Newton to transform the wing into a dining room with a pantry set off at the northern end. The pantry doors are set in canted corners at the northern end of the room. An elaborate Gothic chimney breast and armorial stained glass in the windows and in the doors to the pantry ornament the room.

Two frame buildings, a stable fronted by two hexagonal towers and a gardener's cottage topped by a mansard roof, are located northwest of the house and are now vacant.

Malbone is situated in planted grounds typical of Newport and of other fine houses of its period. Cast iron gate posts mark the beginning of a curving drive from the entrance to the house. Sited on an artificial bank that falls away to the east, south and west, the house is edged by extensive foundation planting. Open lawns extend to the rear and sides of the house. Across the lawn to the south and on a lower level is a long expanse of grass flanked by boxwoods and conifers with two tremendous weeping beeches marking the opposite ends of the rectangular space. Winding brick paths and informal plantings surround this space, and beyond these well-maintained areas are the now-overgrown kitchen garden, orchard, and pasture.

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national prominence as a designer in the Greek Revival style. On his own, he became proficient in producing Gothic Revival country houses. Calling himself an "architectural composer," Davis was considered the most skilled draughtsman of his age. Andrew Jackson Downing used Davis as a source for designs in his influential Treatise on...Landscape Gardening (1841) and The Architecture of Country Houses (1850). In the latter volume, Davis supplied plate XXXI, "a villa in the Pointed Style," which bears strong similarities to his plan for Malbone. Triple tile chimney pots, circular windows in the gables, labels over the other windows, and porches of sawn Gothic trusses appear in this illustration and at Malbone. The plan features several rooms with angled corners and stairways located in secondary spaces as at Malbone.

A. J. Downing, a landscape gardener and publicist, was the major arbiter of American architectural taste in the mid 1800's. Using illustrations by Davis and others, he theorized that architectural styles should be in conformity with their landscape setting. A gently undulating landscape with smooth, regular forms demanded the modified symmetry of an Italianate house; an irregular environment with rough, pointed forms suggested the angular, asymmetrical shapes of the Gothic Revival. Malbone represents a compromise of these two aesthetic theories. The symmetrical plan of the earlier garden and the partially standing walls of the colonial house influenced a regular design. The romantic associations of rebuilding a ruin and the conifers added to the plantings, however, suggested a Gothic residence.

In several stages from the late 1860's through the 1880's, Malbone was remodeled and refurnished by Henry Bedlow, the house's second resident. The Newport Mercury for May 8, 1875 reported:

Henry Bedlow has entirely changed the inside of his fine residence, the old Malbone place, and fitted it up after unique and tasteful designs, chiefly his own. He has built probably one of the most elaborate staircases to be found in the city. The house is entirely new furnished, the furniture being all imported, being selected by Mr. Bedlow himself in Europe.

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Actually, Bedlow employed Dudley Newton, a locally important architect, and Perry G. Case & Co., builders, to do the work. In 1887, a "new stone stable" was added; that building is no longer standing but two earlier outbuildings remain.

The grounds and gardens have always been a major interest of the owners of Malbone. Godfrey Malbone's elaborate gardens, which strongly influenced all later landscape schemes for the estate, were frequently described in contemporary accounts. According to Rev. Edward Peterson, a mid-nineteenth century historian,

The garden, which lay directly in front of the mansion (to the south), with natural embankments embracing as it did ten acres, was enchantingly laid out, with gravelled walks, and highly ornamented with box, fruits of the rarest and choicest kinds, flowers and shrubbery of every description. Three artificial ponds with a silver fish spouting in the water, gave to the place the most romantic appearance.

In 1796, thirty years after the fire, Mr. Eugene Mahé announced in the Newport Mercury that he had acquired the grounds which would be improved and opened on a commercial basis. Frequent accounts of visits to the grounds can be found on into the first half of the nineteenth century. When Thomas Hunter of Newport wrote to his mother in September of 1842, he mentioned that the fish pond was now overgrown and that the artificial mounds of Malbone were almost level, but that Mr. J. Prescott Hall now owned the property.

In reviving the garden at Malbone, Hall maintained the formality of the eighteenth-century design rather than creating a landscape environment which would repeat the irregular forms and rough texture of the house. An article in The Art Journal for 1876 stated:

Mr. Hall, with judicious taste, restored the terraces and the box as far as possible, and restocked the deserted grounds with marble fauns, naiads, hamadryads, and nymphs after, perhaps, the questionable taste which prevailed in the Versailles period. Time has made these marble

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visitors grey so that they compose beautifully with the dark green of firs, the lawn, and the fine plantations of domestic and foreign trees.

Hall may have also added the line of Cedars of Lebanon (a typical Victorian exotic) that were still standing along the western property line in the first quarter of the twentieth century.

In 1905, Lewis Gouverneur Morris, a descendant of the Halls and the Bedlows, inherited Malbone. The Morris family was responsible for much of the landscape design that exists today. Showing sensitivity to history and tradition, the Morris' formal garden maintains the location and character of the colonial precedent.

The owners of Malbone have figured prominently in the life of Newport and are representative of the changing social history of the city. Godfrey Malbone was one of Newport's most successful merchants during the height of its prosperity in the mid eighteenth century. After the great fire and Godfrey Malbone's death, the children removed to the family plantation at Brooklyn, Connecticut, from which the sandstone to build Malbone had been taken. Edward Malbone, the miniature painter from Newport, was also a descendant of this family.

Jonathan Prescott Hall (1796-1862) purchased the Malbone property to erect a country house in Newport. Hall was a man of diverse talents and interests who served as a Clerk for the New York House of Representatives and as the district attorney for the Southern District of New York. He was a specialist in real property law, a student of American and English literature, and a close friend of Daniel Webster. He married Harriet DeWolf, a member of the most prominent family of Bristol, Rhode Island, which initially brought him to Newport. Charles DeWolf, Mrs. Hall's cousin, owned Vaucluse (1803), another major Newport country seat about three miles from Malbone.

The second owner of the present Malbone was Henry Bedlow (1822-1914), who in 1850 married Josephine DeWolf Homer, through whose family they inherited the house. Like his predecessor, Bedlow was a member of a prominent New York City family. He attended Harvard Law School and was admitted to the New York bar. He also practiced medicine here and in France, served as the American Attaché in Naples, and was a member of the United States Dead Sea Expedition. The Bedlows spent

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summers and autumns in Newport, and from 1876 to 1879, he served as the mayor of the city. When he died in Monte Carlo in 1914, the house was given to his only surviving child, Harriet Hall Bedlow Morris.

Lewis Gouverneur Morris (1882-1967) inherited Malbone from his mother. He was born in Newport and was a descendant of the first governor of New Jersey. His first wife, Allita Lorillard Bailey, died in 1935. He later married the former Princess Anita Stewart de Bragança, widow of Prince Miguel de Bragança. The second Mrs. Morris is still the mistress of Malbone.

The development of the country seat or resort cottage at Newport can be traced in the physical changes at Malbone and in its residents. The opulence of Godfrey Malbone's country house was representative of a life style led by other Newporters like Abraham and William Redwood, Charles Bowler, or John Bannister. These men all maintained fine city residences and country places with elaborate gardens. They could conduct business at their wharves and then escape to their rural retreat to live like squires. That lifestyle and pattern died out with the fall of Newport's economy in the British occupation of the American Revolution.

The re-emergence of Newport as a resort center in the nineteenth century corresponds to Prescott Hall's purchase of the Malbone property. Hall was a "pioneer cottager," drawn to Newport through family ties and representative of the new wave of country house owners who came to Newport only for the summer season. The era of Newport's increased importance as a vacation center was signaled by the construction in 1825 of the Brinley House, the city's first resort hotel. Increased land speculation began around 1845 and "by 1852 twelve handsome residences had been erected, four by gentlemen from Boston, eight by gentlemen from the Middle and Southern states." The present Malbone was one of those twelve, but it was located northwest of the city and not in the area of pronounced development, Bellevue Avenue and Ocean Drive.

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The Halls, Bedlows, and Morrises have been typical of the wealthy vacationers who have maintained summer houses in the Newport environs for more than a century. By contrast to the marble palaces of the Gilded Age or the spreading mansions of the early twentieth century, Malbone represents an earlier and less pompous stage of the Newport summer scene.

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_____, April 5, 1873.

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_____, January 20, 1883.

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