Form No. 10-300 (Rev. 10-74)

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Science & Invention

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC: Joseph Henry House

AND/OR COMMON: Joseph Henry House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: Princeton University Campus — __NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN: Princeton — __ VICINITY OF — CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 5

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
New Jersey	34	Mercer	21

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	__PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	X PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	__PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	X PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	__ENTERTAINMENT	__RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	__YES: RESTRICTED	__GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
		X NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME: Trustees of Princeton University

STREET & NUMBER: Nassau Hall

CITY, TOWN: Princeton — __ VICINITY OF — STATE: New Jersey

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Mercer County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER: Market Street

CITY, TOWN: Trenton — STATE: New Jersey

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE: None

DATE

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN — STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
X EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	__ORIGINAL SITE
__GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	X MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Joseph Henry House is located on the campus of Princeton University, just southwest of the intersection of Nassau and South Tulane Streets. The two story brick house has a gable roof and a five bay facade. The central doorway with transom and sidelights, is framed by a simple portico. On the north and south ends of the house there are a pair of porches which are slightly recessed from the front facade and which extend slightly past the rear facade, which supports a pent porch roof for the length of the second story.

The spacious house is used as the residence of the dean of men, and is enclosed by hedges on the east and west sides and is flanked by the Student Center on the south, and by Nassau Street on the north. The house has been moved three times from its original site.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION	
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	X SCIENCE	
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE	
__1600-1699	__ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER	
X 1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION	
__1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	__POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		X INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1797-1878 BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

An American scientist of the first rank, Joseph Henry produced a series of major inventions in the field of electromagnetism, including the electromagnet, the first electric motor, and the telegraph. In addition to his influence as an inventor, as the first secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, Henry established the Institution as a major scientific center in American and abroad.

The Joseph Henry house has been moved to the campus of Princeton University, where Henry taught for 14 years. The two-and-a-half story brick house serves as the residence of the dean of students.

HISTORY

Henry's scientific ability manifested itself quite sometime after his birth in Albany New York, on December 17, 1797. When about sixteen, the young Henry exhibited a keen interest in the stage. So attracted was he by the theater, that he became the leader of some local amateur thespians and wrote two plays. Fate, in the form of an accident, forced him to remain home for some time, however, and it was then that he read a book owned by a roomer, Lectures on Experimental Philosophy, Astronomy and Chemistry Intended Chiefly for the Use of Young People. That book, as Henry said, "opened to me a new world of thought and enjoyment."[1] Abandoning drama, Henry enrolled in the Albany Academy. After his graduation, he became a professor of mathematics and natural philosophy at the school in 1826. Harriet L. Alexander became his bride four years later, by whom Henry was to have six children.

When he became a teacher at the Albany Academy, Henry undertook the investigation of electro-magnetism. His independence of thought is shown by this step, for almost nothing had been done in electricity since the era of Benjamin Franklin. The mysteries of magnetism claimed his attention for some time, when one night he abruptly announced to a friend, "Tomorrow I shall make a famous experiment."[2] True to his word, Henry the next day devised the electromagnet that is so widely used today. An electromagnet contains a core of soft metal, around which are wrapped numerous coils of insulated wire. Henry's contribution to the magnet, the insulated wire and more than a single coil of wire, so improved the magnet that it could lift 600 pounds with the current of only one cell. In 1830, Henry produced an induced current by using his magnet, almost a year before Michael Farady's famous experiment.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

S. Sydney Bradford, "Joseph Henry House," National Survey of Historic Sites and buildings, 3/23/64.
Roger Burlingame, March of the Ironmen (New York, 1940).
Thomas Coulson, Joseph Henry: His Life and Work (Princeton, 1950).
Donald Egbert, Dictionary of American Biography (Princeton, 1947).
Bernard Jaffe, Men of Science in America (New York, 1958).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	18	528970	4466380
B			
C			
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Beginning at the walkway to the west of the Henry House and the campus fence which runs parallel to Nassau Street on the southern side of the street, proceed south along said walkway 250', thence east 100', thence north 250', thence west 100' to the point of origin.

These boundaries enclose the Henry House with the limits of lawn and grounds which are immediately contingent with the residence.

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
Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force

ORGANIZATION
Historic Sites Survey

DATE
6/5/75

STREET & NUMBER
1100 L. Street, NW.

TELEPHONE
202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN
Washington

STATE
D.C.

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE 8/31/78

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: William Lebovich

DATE June 15, 1978

~~KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER~~ (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

The importance of Henry's electromagnet was recognized by the inventor, but he did not pursue its application. He did build an electric motor, the world's first, which incorporated his magnet, but he looked upon that invention as only a toy. Similarly, he developed an electric telegraph, both at Albany and later at Princeton, but he also failed to exploit its commercial possibilities. Samuel F.B. Morse, with Henry's help, made the telegraph a practical thing, as Henry admitted in later years.

Henry's failure to capitalize on his inventions, both while at Albany and subsequently, conformed to his general character. He never regarded anything in science or invention as his own. A much broader view governed him; and as he said at one time:

> I have sought, . . . , no patent for inventions, and solicited no remuneration for my labors, but have freely given their results to the world; expecting only in return to enjoy the consciousness of having added by my investigations to the sum of human knowledge.[3]

Fame he also ignored. A tireless experimenter, with a simplicity of manner, a receptiveness to new ideas, and a genuine desire to cooperate with other scientists, Henry in his unique way contributed more to the world's knowledge of electricity than any other American.

This unusual American was called to Princeton University, then the College of New Jersey, in 1832. Henry taught there for the next fourteen years, becoming a popular instructor. At the same time, he continued his own work, as one author says, without collaborators and without generous support from a foundation. The lack of assistants and foundation support did not impede his work, for while at Princeton he produced the electromagnetic relay (which really made the electric telegraph possible), paved the way for the development of the electrical transformer and discovered the self-induced current. Electricity only took part of his time, for he also studied problems concerning solar physics, the sun, metals and the velocity of projectiles. In the summer of 1844, for example, he spent most of his time blowing soap bubbles in an attempt to unlock the secrets of films and surface tension.

Despite Henry's concentration on his investigations, his fame spread in both America and Europe. It was no surprise, then, when he was chosen as the first secretary of the new Smithsonian Institution on December 3, 1846. In accepting the job, Henry knew his own work would suffer, but he felt the call of duty and the desire to stimulate American scientific effort. For the next thirty-two years

he headed the Smithsonian, making it a scientific institution of the first rank. He not only concerned himself with the institution's development in America, but sought to make it an active force in the international scene. As leader of the Smithsonian, for example, he urged scientific bodies to catalog their papers. Thus, when the Royal Society of London produced its first catalog in 1864, the Society attributed the work to Henry's urging of the publication of such catalogs.

When Henry died on May 13, 1878, he had put the Smithsonian Institution on a sound basis. Because of that accomplishment and his host of inventions, Henry rightfully occupies a leading position in the ranks of famous American scientists.

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1 Quoted in Bernard Jaffe, Men of Science, (New York, 1958), 186.
2 Quoted in ibid, 188.
3 Quoted in ibid., 197.