

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Massachusetts	
COUNTY: Middlesex	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Margaret Fuller House

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
71 Cherry Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Cambridge

STATE: Massachusetts      CODE:      COUNTY: Middlesex      CODE:     

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <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
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>social</u> <u>recreational</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____			

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House, Inc., Dick Franke, Executive Director

STREET AND NUMBER:  
71 Cherry Street

CITY OR TOWN: Cambridge      STATE: Massachusetts      CODE: 02139

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Middlesex County Registry of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Cambridge Street and Third Street

CITY OR TOWN: Cambridge      STATE: Massachusetts      CODE:     

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Inventory of Historical Assets of Massachusetts

DATE OF SURVEY: 1967       Federal       State       County       Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
40 Beacon Street

CITY OR TOWN: Boston      STATE: Massachusetts      CODE:     

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" 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

Timothy Fuller built the house at 71 Cherry Street in 1806, and his daughter was born there 4 years later. Although retaining ownership until 1844, the Fuller family moved out in 1826. (During the early 1830s, Margaret Fuller lived in another Cambridge house still extant, Brattle Mansion, but for only about a year.) The Margaret Fuller House is a five-bay three-story frame building with such typical Federal details as a low hip-roof, central fireplace, slender window frames, and unadorned cornice. One of Fuller's biographers characterizes the house as a "large, rambling, ugly building."<sup>1</sup> Perhaps this writer was insensitive to the subtleties of architectural esthetics, however, for one finds the contention elsewhere that "The tall and graceful proportions, graduated windows, refined details, and uncrowded corner site add to the impressive appearance of the house."<sup>2</sup>

During the latter half of the 19th century the house was converted to a tenement, then, in 1902, it was occupied by the Cambridge YWCA as a settlement house. A two-story ell on the north side was removed in 1940 (as was a porch running the full length of the facade some 15 years previous to that). After 1941, an organization called the Margaret Fuller House (since 1970, the Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House) carried on this work. Though scarcely affluent, it has been able to replace the siding, restore the trim, and paint the exterior. Inside, the first floor retains its four-room center-hall plan, though few of the original details remain aside from the mantle, dado, and trim in the parlor on the left. From the rear, the integrity of the house is badly marred, though the front is in relatively good condition. There is a continual problem with graffiti, yet perhaps there is also something more than wishful thinking to the statement that:

"In a neighborhood crowded by dense development ... the house has become the rallying point of neighborhood pride. Local groups are working to maintain the center's programs and restore the building as well. The renewed appearance of the Fuller House and its historical associations have made it an inspiration to other restoration and renovation projects in the area."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Margaret Bell, Margaret Fuller (New York, 1930), p. 20.

<sup>2</sup>Anne R. Wardwell, National Register Nomination, March 25, 1971.

<sup>3</sup>Wardwell, loc. cit.

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) 1810-1826

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Margaret Fuller's Woman in the Nineteenth Century, published in 1845, was the first major American exposition of feminism. It also marks the apogee to the career of this amazing polymath who became a prodigy of erudition by her teens and died in a shipwreck at 40. It was in the Cambridgeport house at 71 Cherry Street, where she lived until she was 16, that her father set her on the course which determined her rebellious temperament, her enigmatic personality, and, ultimately, her tragic fate. Though sometimes resentful that her father had paced her education at such a breakneck speed, Fuller also wrote of one "Miranda" (herself, thinly disguised) whose father had given her the advantage of treating her as "a living mind," thus enabling her to confront any man on equal terms.

The most perceptive of American intellectual historians, Perry Miller, suggests that Fuller was not immodest to tell Emerson that no other American could match her intellect, for "she was indeed speaking the sober truth." Her brilliance was amply complemented by her daring: she was a "first-class rebel" who argued for the emancipation of woman from every aspect of male domination, not excluding the domination embodied in the entire range of sexual mores.

Fuller was to America what Mary Wollstonecraft was to England, a fascinating personage who has attracted many biographers and will no doubt have others as the partisans of the present-day renaissance in women's rights seek for historical roots. They may interpret her differently than earlier biographers, but none will dispute Miller's conclusion that "She was a great radical and so we should remember her." It seems altogether fitting that her birthplace and girlhood home should now be a settlement house devoted to preserving another radical ideal--that of humanitarianism, tolerance, and community against the looming danger of inner-city disintegration.

Biography

Margaret Fuller once announced to Ralph Waldo Emerson, "I know all the people worth knowing in America, and find no intellect comparable to my own." Anticipating the jarring effect of such immodesty, Perry Miller

(Continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Flexner, Eleanor, Century of Struggle: The Woman's Rights Movement in The United States (Cambridge, 1959).

Miller, Perry, Margaret Fuller, American Romantic (Garden City, N. Y., 1963).

Stern, M. B., Life of Margaret Fuller (New York, 1942).

Wade, Mason, Margaret Fuller: Whetstone of Genius (New York, 1940).

**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 TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		42° 21' 52"	71° 05' 53"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than 1 acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Robert C. Post, Survey Historian

ORGANIZATION Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service DATE 8/1/73

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

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE D.C. CODE \_\_\_\_\_

**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

63

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Middlesex	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Significance (1)

Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House

interjects that "She had no need to be modest: she was indeed speaking the sober truth."<sup>1</sup> Nearly all who have studied Margaret Fuller's career have been moved to superlatives regarding her intellect. Vernon L. Parrington writes, for example, that "Her quick mind seems to have been an electric current that stimulated other minds to activity, and created a vortex of speculation wherever she passed."<sup>2</sup>

Extravagant in her admiration of Goethe and the Romantic Idealists, Fuller was powerfully attracted to Transcendentalism, but soon concluded it did not demand the sort of existential commitment she craved. She could never identify closely with the narrow dogmatism of Garrison and his circle either, and she found Fourierism a bore. Yet it was partly from the Transcendentalists, partly from abolitionism, and partly from Fourier that she received what Parrington terms "her equipment for the cause which, more than any other except the dramatic Roman Revolution, appealed to the deeper rebellions of her soul." That cause was woman's rights, and her 1845 book, Woman in the Nineteenth Century, has been called by the most penetrating of her biographers "the first considered statement of feminism in this country."<sup>3</sup>

It was a truly daring book, its radicalism underscored all the more strongly by the fact that even the abolitionists were at odds over the appearance of women on their platforms. Fuller argued not only for equal political rights and economic opportunity, but for the emancipation of women from the entire congeries of male-determined mores. And what she had to say about prostitution, about sexual customs in general--indeed, about the institution of marriage itself--inevitably engendered a reaction of shock cum outrage. Publishing such a book, Parrington emphasizes, "was a bold thing to do, needing more courage even than to engage in a Fourieristic onslaught upon the conventions of private property. Only a first-class rebel would have had the temerity to offer such morsels to wagging tongues."

Much has been made of Fuller's anguished personal life and of the effect her childhood and adolescent milieu had in shaping her rebellious and enigmatic personality. She lived in the house at 71 Cherry Street in

<sup>1</sup>The American Transcendentalists (Garden City, 1957), p. 101.

<sup>2</sup>Main Currents of American Thought (New York, 1954), II, p. 418.

<sup>3</sup>Katherine Anthony, Margaret Fuller, A Psychological Biography (New York, 1920), p. 80.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Middlesex	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Significance (2) Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House

Cambridgeport only until she was 16--an association which might not normally be significant, but in this instance unquestionably is. Not only is it the house in which she resided the longest period of time (for she spent her twenties and thirties almost continually on the move, and died at 40), but it was there that her brilliant yet tragic temperament was shaped.

Fuller was the eldest daughter of a grim and impatient lawyer who totally dominated his wife, 10 years his junior, and took complete command of Margaret's upbringing. He forced her education at an incredible pace, "which shattered her health but left her a prodigy of erudition."<sup>4</sup> She was reading Latin at 6, Ovid at 8, Shakespeare and Moliere at 10. Around then, she began to manifest a hysteria which plagued her for the rest of her life. In her memoirs she wrote that "children should not through books antedate their actual experiences, but should take them gradually as sympathy and interpretation are needed"<sup>5</sup> This sounds like an expression of resentment against paternal dominance, yet Fuller's relationship with her father embodied an element of profound ambivalence. In Women in the Nineteenth Century, she wrote of one "Miranda," whose father treated her not as a toy but as "a living mind," thereby enabling her to confront men as equals and to take her place "not only in the world of organized being, but in the world of mind."

This, Fuller began to do at an extraordinarily young age, and had become an intimate of the likes of Emerson, Alcott, and Thoreau by her early twenties. At 29, she inaugurated her famous "conversations," colloquia about avant-garde social questions with "well-educated and thinking women," from which she drew much of the inspiration for her famous book. She also edited the Boston Dial in concert with Emerson and George Ripley, and it was on the pages of this Transcendentalist journal that she published the initial version of her book under the title, "The Great Lawsuit"--"the first important woman's rights tract in America."<sup>6</sup> While editor of the Dial, Fuller attracted the attention of Horace Greeley, who subsequently

<sup>4</sup>The American Transcendentalists, p. 101.

<sup>5</sup>Ralph Waldo Emerson, et al., eds., Memoirs of Margaret Fuller [Ossoli] (Boston, 1852), I, p. 31.

<sup>6</sup>Page Smith, Daughters of the Promised Land (Boston, 1970), p. 176.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Massachusetts	
COUNTY Middlesex	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Significance (3)

Margaret Fuller Neighborhood House

persuaded her to come to work for his New York Tribune. This was a daring move for the time, but in the 2 years she spent on the staff of the Tribune she established a reputation as "one of the best-equipped, most sympathetic, and genuinely philosophical [literary] critics produced in American prior to 1850."<sup>7</sup>

Fuller spent her last years in Europe, becoming deeply involved with Mazzini and the Roman Revolution. She was returning to America with the manuscript history of the latter when she perished in a shipwreck off Fire Island in 1850, along with her Italian husband and 2-year old son.

This extraordinary woman has had many biographers, some very thorough, others most discerning. Yet nobody has captured her essence with such flair as V. L. Parrington, in his classic Main Currents. Margaret Fuller's life, Parrington wrote,

"was an epitome of the great revolt of the New England mind against Puritan asceticism and Yankee materialism. She was the emotional expression of a rebellious generation that had done with the past and was questioning the future .... A radical humanitarian in all her sympathies and instincts ... Margaret Fuller was too vivid a personality, too complete an embodiment of the rich ferment of the forties, to be carelessly forgotten."<sup>8</sup>

To this, the second great intellectual historian America has produced, Perry Miller, adds:

"It is lamentable that in subsequent conventions of feminists, Margaret Fuller became stereotyped as a pioneer of "votes for women." The vote was incidental to her grand design .... [She] could see that the cause of "women's rights" was only a subordinate part of the most comprehensive program of nineteenth-century liberation. She was a great radical, and so we should remember her."<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup>William P. Trent, et al., Cambridge History of American Literature (New York, 1917), I, p. 343.

<sup>8</sup>Main Currents of American Thought, I, pp. 425-726.

<sup>9</sup>The American Transcendentalists, p. 330.