

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

For HCRS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received JAN 26 1982

date entered MAR 11 1982

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic

THE ROCKINGHAM HOTEL

and/or common

THE ROCKINGHAM HOUSE/THE ROCKINGHAM

2. Location

street & number

401 State Street

___ not for publication

city, town

Portsmouth

___ vicinity of

congressional district

First

state

New Hampshire

code 33

county

Rockingham

code 015

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 residences

___ religious

___ scientific

___ transportation

___ other:

4. Owner of Property

name

The Rockingham House Condominium Association, Inc.

street & number

401 State Street

city, town

Portsmouth

___ vicinity of

state New Hampshire 03801

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

Rockingham County Registry of Deeds

Rockingham County Courthouse

street & number

Hampton Road

city, town

Exeter

state New Hampshire 03801

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title

NONE

has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ___ no

date

___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

7. Description

| | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Condition | | Check one | Check one |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input checked="" 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 Rockingham Hotel is a five-story brick building with two attached brick annexes. The building stands on a grass terrace, with a granite retaining wall at the sidewalk level, and is reached by two flights of granite steps. Primary emphasis is given to the facade of the main structure, which is ten bays wide and extends 105 feet along State Street in an area of Portsmouth otherwise occupied by wooden structures dating mostly from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. In keeping with the predominant architectural style of this part of Portsmouth, and with the 1785 building which originally stood on its site, the Rockingham is designed in a classical style of some complexity, utilizing elements that recall the French and Italian Renaissance but which primarily incorporate allusions to the colonial past of Portsmouth.

The facade is composed of large, hard-burned Philadelphia pressed bricks with detailing in Nova Scotia red sandstone and architectural terra cotta. This elevation is perfectly symmetrical, with two balanced entrances guarded by pairs of cast and gilded metal lions. Each entrance is at the central axis of a five-bay unit. The two five-bay units are separated by a wide pier of unadorned brickwork at the building's center. Each five-bay unit recalls, on a grand scale, the facade of the 1785 Woodbury Langdon House which had stood on the site and had eventually become the first Rockingham House.

The doorway on the west leads to the main lobby of the hotel, while that on the east, originally the ladies' entrance, leads to an elaborate parlor and to a large dining room at the rear (north) of the building. Each entrance is centered in a slightly projecting pavilion like that of the 1785 house that had stood on the site. The entire facade is divided vertically into an architectural basement, three upper stories, and an architectural attic.

The three stories above the basement are marked by sandstone stringcourses at the levels of window sills and lintels. The two pavilions are emphasized by elaborate copper-clad bay windows which are supported above the second floor by ornamental consoles and a corbelled base of moulded masonry. These windows extend through the third and fourth stories and the copper panels between the windows of the two stories are impressed with geometric designs, including herringbone and strigil bands, corner bosses, and central cabochons. The coved cornices of each bay, above the fourth story, have impressed strigil and acanthus bands and are topped by elaborate wrought iron railings which create balconies at fifth-floor doorways.

The panels between the third and fourth stories of the main facade are filled with terra cotta plaques modelled by sculptor and painter F. Mortimer Lamb. Those in the pavilions have radiating ornaments of acanthus leaves; those outside the pavilions depict the four ages of man--infancy (on the west), youth, maturity, and old age (on the east).

Above the fourth story is a heavy cornice composed of red sandstone carved into closely-spaced curved corbels. Above this rises the fifth or attic story of the building which, on each side of the two pavilions, is capped by a brick corbel table, a cornice, and a panelled brick parapet terminated at the building's ends and at the pavilions by piers with ball finials. The pavilions are more elaborately treated, having red sandstone entablatures capped by triangular pediments of the same material. The tympani of these pediments are filled with terra cotta sculpture by F. Mortimer Lamb. That on the west depicts Woodbury Langdon, builder of the 1785 house which originally stood on the site of the present Rockingham. That on the east portrays Frank Jones, builder of the present structure. Both portraits are in high relief and are set into concave medallions surrounded by foliate ornament.

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

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CONTINUATION SHEET #1-DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

Attached to the main building are two annexes. The largest of these, the Porter Wing, is an L-shaped brick structure of four stories, attached to the north (rear) of the main building. Its windows are grouped in pairs, with stone lintels, and its cornice consists of a double corbel table. The second annex, on the west, is a 2½ story brick structure with a Mansard roof. Now called the John Paul Jones Wing, this was originally the hotel billiard room and more recently a ballroom. It is connected to the Porter Wing by a two-story passageway.

The interior of the building is divided by 12-inch brick firewalls into four separate zones. Following the conversion of the building into condominiums in 1973, most of the upper suites and rooms became private property. Many of the hotel's most elaborately-finished areas, however, remain accessible to the public and are of considerable architectural importance. The doorway on the west leads directly to the original hotel lobby. Richly finished in Santo Domingan mahogany, this room was intended to evoke the colonial heritage of the hotel. The room is surrounded with high panelled wainscoting, above which rise a series of short fluted Ionic pilasters which support a full classical entablature. The denticulated cornice of this entablature merges with the casings of a network of mahogany beams which divide the ceiling into panels. Each panel is filled with impressed Lincrusta-Walton linoleum. The lobby has two fireplaces. The first, set into an Ionic enframing on the north wall, evokes an equestrian theme that recalls Frank Jones' love of horses. The fireplace opening is surrounded by a colossal brass horseshoe, and around this is a terra cotta bas relief hunt scene designed by F. Mortimer Lamb. The second fireplace, which stood behind the original hotel desk, is surrounded by patterned tiles and is surmounted by a large marble-faced clock. This is set in a mahogany enframing patterned after the sarcophagus-hooded tall clocks of colonial days.

To the west of the lobby is a panelled room originally intended as a reading room for hotel guests. The woodwork of this chamber duplicates in mahogany the original pine detailing of the parlor of the 1785 Woodbury Langdon Mansion that once stood here. Directly to the north of the reading room is the original dining room of the Langdon mansion, preserved during the remodelling that destroyed the original house in 1871. This octagonal room, now used as a business office, was one of the earliest Adamesque interiors in America. With detailing based on plates from William Pain's The Practical Builder (London, 1774), the room has corner pilasters with stylized Corinthian capitals. Its upper walls are encircled with a modified Doric entablature bearing a quilloche band, incised triglyphs, and a cornice with fret dentils. Doorways are capped by broken triangular pediments with elaborated bed mouldings, while the room's mantelpiece is in a colonial revival style that blends with the work of a century earlier.

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CONTINUATION SHEET #2-DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

The eastern entrance to the building enters upon a ladies' parlor to the left and a sitting room to the right. The elaborately decorated parlor, until recently referred to as the "Gold Room", has been converted to the bar that serves the nearby dining room. The latter, extending across the northeast rear of the building's main block, is now a commercial restaurant. This room is one of the most elaborately decorated in the hotel. The mahogany woodwork is finished in a colonial revival style with pilasters that suggest those in the original Langdon dining room. Both the room's frieze and the mahogany-framed mantelpiece at the east end are ornamented with carved arabesques and festoons in a neo-Adamesque style that evokes the Federal period heritage of the hotel and the city of Portsmouth. The ceiling of the dining room is divided into geometric panels by a network of mahogany mouldings, and these panels are alternately filled with Lincrusta-Walton linoleum and with trompe l'oeil frescoes painted by John Gannon of Manchester, New Hampshire. The silver chandeliers of the dining room and the hallway outside, set with semi-precious stones, were fashioned by the Boston jewelry firm of Shreve, Crump and Low.

The rooms of the upper stories and the annexes, the former finished in mahogany or cherry and in some cases decorated with frescoed ceilings, are now condominiums and are not open to the public.

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/ 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 type="checkbox"/> 1900– | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | |

Specific dates 1785, 1885

Builder/Architect John Langdon, Jabez H. Sears, Stahl Associates

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Rockingham Hotel was one of the finest small hotels of late nineteenth-century New England. Hailed at its opening in 1886 as a "building which in richness of decorations and palatial appointment...has few rivals, and no superiors, in New England,"¹ the Rockingham was designed by a little-known Boston architect, Jabez H. Sears. The building stands on the site of the 1785 house of Woodbury Langdon, and its architecture reflects stylistic and symbolic allusions to its colonial predecessor. Despite its complex design and sumptuous detailing, the hotel was built as one of New England's first large-scale compositions in the colonial revival style.

The Woodbury Langdon House, constructed on this site in 1785, was one of the first American dwellings in the Adamesque style.² The brick house was occupied as one of Portsmouth's finest dwellings from 1785 until the death of its owner, a merchant and jurist, in 1805. The house was purchased in 1830 by a company that converted it into a hotel, the first Rockingham House. Frank Jones, a local brewer and industrialist, purchased the house in 1870 and replaced it with a large Mansard-roofed structure, the second Rockingham. When the latter burned in 1884, Jones built the still larger present hotel, which covered some 13,000 square feet of ground and had a capacity of 100 guests. Through all these changes, the 1785 dining room, designed from plates in William Pain's *The Practical Builder* (London, 1740), survived intact. After the fire of 1884, the room set the "colonial" theme which pervades the third and present Rockingham Hotel.

Constructed in 1885, the present Rockingham was erected just 100 years after the construction of the Langdon House. In keeping with this centennial anniversary and with the enthusiasm for colonial detailing which was then beginning to pervade American architecture, the present structure was meant, for all its complexity, to evoke the spirit of the earlier building. The facade of the brick Langdon House had been five bays wide, three stories tall, and had had a central pedimented pavilion marked with stringcourses. The 1885 building placed two such facades side by side, augmenting their height through the use of architectural basement and attic stories. The symbolic intention of the architect was expressed through the terra cotta figures in the matched pediments. These represent Woodbury Langdon, builder of the original mansion, and Frank Jones, builder of the hotel of a century later. The passage of time was further symbolized by the four sculptural plaques representing the four ages of man.

The Langdon House established the theme for the hotel's interior as well. Not only was the original octagonal dining room preserved at the new hotel's northwest corner, but the parlor of the Langdon House was duplicated in mahogany in the adjacent southwest corner, serving as a reading room off the lobby. Newspaper notices of the period were sensitive to this theme, remarking on the "beauty of the colonial mouldings and carvings."³ The lobby and corridors were finished with high, panelled "colonial" wainscoting and with classical pilasters. The dining room was designed in an especially lavish neo-Adamesque style, being enriched with carved Pain-type Corinthian capitals, festoons, bellflowers, arabesques and paterae. The room was originally rendered even more impressive by plate glass mirrors set in the wall piers above the wainscoting.

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UTM NOT VERIFIED
ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

9. Major Bibliographical References

Stahl/Bennett, Inc. "The Rockingham Condominiums" Architectural Record, Dec. 1974.
p. 112-113.
Stahl Associates. "The Rockingham Condominiums, Portsmouth, New Hampshire." New England Architect, November 1973.

-continued-

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approx. 1/2 acre (22,440.20 sq. ft.)

Quadrangle name Portsmouth, NH - ME

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-------------------|---|--|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | <u>1</u> <u>9</u> | <u>3</u> <u>5</u> <u>6</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>0</u> | <u>4</u> <u>7</u> <u>7</u> <u>0</u> <u>5</u> <u>1</u> <u>0</u> | B | | | |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| C | | | | D | | | |
| E | | | | F | | | |
| G | | | | H | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification : The Rockingham House 180 ft. frontage on State St. It is bounded on the east by the Abraham Shaw House of Dr. Jonathan L. Holzaepfel and on the west by the John Paul Jones House of the Portsmouth Historical Society. The property extends to Porter St. on the north. Tax map #20--lot #31.

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

| state | code | county | code |
|------------|------|--------|------|
| <u>N/A</u> | | | |
| state | code | county | code |

11. Form Prepared By

| | | | |
|-----------------|--|-----------|-----------------------------|
| name/title | <u>Beatrice C. Jordan, Member of the Board*</u> | | |
| | <u>James L. Garvin</u> | | |
| organization | <u>Rockingham House Condominium Association*</u> | date | <u>November 13, 1980</u> |
| | <u>NH Historical Society</u> | | |
| street & number | <u>401 State Street*</u> | telephone | <u>603-436-5919*</u> |
| | <u>30 Park Street</u> | | <u>603-225-3381</u> |
| city or town | <u>Portsmouth, *</u> | state | <u>New Hampshire* 03801</u> |
| | <u>Concord,</u> | | <u>New Hampshire 03301</u> |

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature]
Commissioner, NH Dept. of Resources & Economic Development
title NH State Historic Preservation Officer date February 12, 1981

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

William H. Braasam date 3.11.82

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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CONTINUATION SHEET #3-SIGNIFICANCE ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

The deliberate retention of the 1785 Langdon dining room and the choice of a strong colonial motif both inside and out make the Rockingham doubly significant. The building preserves the Langdon dining room, one of America's first examples of the Adamesque style. Secondly, the Rockingham is important as a tribute to the colonial heritage of its site and of the city in which it stands. Designed ten years after the centennial of the American Revolution, at a time when American architectural periodicals were beginning to illustrate "colonial" buildings and details, the Rockingham Hotel is an important monument in the American colonial revival.

By 1970 the Rockingham Hotel was falling into disrepair due to lack of patronage. In an effort to develop an economically sound use for the structure, the Rockingham House Condominium Association was incorporated and in 1973 converted the building to condominiums--possibly the first such conversion in northern New England. This work entailed the preservation of the building's exterior unchanged, and was guided by a policy of minimal alteration to interior detailing. A program was developed which allowed important first-floor areas such as the lobby and dining room to remain accessible to the public, thus ensuring their continued enjoyment as parts of New England's architectural legacy.

¹Exeter News-letter, February 5, 1886.

²James L. Garvin, "Bradbury Johnson, Builder-Architect," M.A. thesis, University of Delaware, 1969, pp. 35, 37-40.

³Exeter News-letter, February 5, 1886.

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MAJOR
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL

CONTINUATION SHEET #4-REFERENCES ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

BOOKS:

Bennett, Harold Hotchkiss. Vignettes of Portsmouth: Being Representations of Divers Historic Places in Old Portsmouth. Portsmouth, Helen Pearson and Harold Hotchkiss Bennett (The Stetson Press, Boston) 1913.

Brighton, Ray. Frank Jones: King of the Alemakers. Hampton, N.H., Peter E. Randall, Publisher, 1976. Chap. 10 "The Rockingham".

Brighton, Raymond A. They Come to Fish: A Brief Look at Portsmouth's 350 Years of History., Vol. I & II. (Hampton, N.H.) Randall/Winebaum Enterprises, 1979.

Ellis, George H. The Portsmouth Book. Boston, George H. Ellis, Printer, 1899.

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Gurney, C.S. Portsmouth Historic and Picturesque. Portsmouth, N.H., C.S. Gurney, 1902. p. 129.

Hazlett, C.A. An Historic Calendar of Portsmouth. C.A. Hazlett, Randall Press, Portsmouth, N.H., 1907. p.33.

Penhallow, Wibird. First Portsmouth Directory. c. 1821.

Rehab Right. How to Rehabilitate Your Oakland House Without Sacrificing Architectural Assets. Oakland, California. City of Oakland Planning Department, 1978.

NEWSPAPERS: (microfilm)

Daily Evening Times

Morning Chronicle

Portsmouth Journal

BOOKS: (cont.)

Portsmouth Miscellanea. Scrapbook (Frank Jones, water lines, Pierce Island) (1958?)