

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Stoughton, Mary Fisk, House
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 90 Brattle Street not for publication
city, town Cambridge vicinity
state Massachusetts code MA county Middlesex code 017 zip code 02139

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

single dwelling/domestic

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

single dwelling/domestic

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Richardsonian Romanesque

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation rough stoneswalls wood frame covered with natural shinglesroof asbestos shinglesother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The front of the house faces north-northeast and is located at the corner of Brattle and Ash Streets. The house measures 48 feet by 92 feet with a 24 foot x 10 foot porch. The side entrance is on Ash Street with a narrow porch in front of the door. The present front porch had a window that has been enlarged into a door. Most of the windows are multi-pane over a single pane.

In 1900, Mrs. Stoughton's son, John Fiske, added a large library, conservatory and music room. He was a noted American historian and librarian at Harvard College. The architectural firm for the additions was Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge and the builder was F.B. Furbish.

The condition of the fabric of the house has been well maintained, inside and out. Additions to it, and remodeling inside, have, however, changed the original plan. The additions, on the west side, which extended it to the property line, provided Fiske with a large library on the second floor, servants' rooms on the third floor, and substantially increased the kitchen on the first floor. This addition also extended to the south. The bay was made wider, thus keeping the proportions about the same. At the east end, the house was extended to the south (rear) and the third floor converted into rooms during Hurlbut's residence. The Conservatory was added on the south side of the dining room. On the north side of the dining room, what was a window onto the porch was transformed into a door and the porch was extended further into the yard. The open loggia above the porch has been enclosed.¹

The attached illustration shows the original floor plan and the later additions. While the exterior character remains the same, the interior was transformed into an Edwardian house with scenic wall paper in the great stair hall, fireplace with carved mantels, wall mouldings, oak floors and leaded glass windows. The interior design was by Pierre la Rose.

The present floor plan on the first floor includes a living room, old study (later rear entrance hall), front foyer and stairway (later music room), dining room and porch (later conservatory), pantry, kitchen, old kitchen, modern servants' rooms and a rear hall.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D NHL Criteria 4

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

1882-1883

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Richardson, Henry Hobson

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

As Richardson's career developed, it is possible to trace the evolution of his style from typical 19th-century picturesque ornamented medieval buildings to his mature works, which were large, massive and simplified. The Stoughton House is one of the last commissions finished before his premature death. Richardson did not invent the "Shingle Style," but he was its finest practitioner beginning in 1880, using it for all of his country and suburban houses thereafter. This Cambridge house is the finest surviving example from his hand in this mode. There is no ornament or historical detail, only the mass of the house with beautifully worked gray shingles broken by window openings with dark green sash.

The history of the Stoughton house is eccentric in the best New England tradition:

Mary Fisk Stoughton (? - 1901) was the widow of Edwin Wallace Stoughton (1818-1882), a prominent New York City patent attorney who had been ambassador to Russia from 1877 to 1879. She was also the mother of John Fiske (1842-1901) by her earlier marriage to Edmund Brewster Green, who had been Henry Clay's private secretary. John Fiske, who was born Edmund Fisk Green but had his name legally changed in 1855, was an 1863 graduate of Harvard, later a popular lecturer, historian, and Harvard faculty member. After the death of her husband, Mrs. Stoughton moved to Cambridge to be closer to her son.¹

The Stoughton House commission entered Richardson's office in June 1882. But Richardson left on a European trip on June 22, 1882, and returned to Brookline only in late September. Thus the construction documents were probably completed after his return. The house was finished by the end of 1883.

Alterations to the house were made later. John Fiske converted the second story of the service wing to a library. Later owners extended the house to the rear following designs by Shepley, Rutan, and Coolidge. Glazing of the front

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings
Survey # MA-1033, 1969
- recorded by Historic American Engineering
Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Library of Congress

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 1/4 acre

UTM References

A

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

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

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D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The site is on the northeast corner of Brattle and Ash Streets. The house abuts the property line on the west and is on a lot 96 feet running west to east and 52 feet north to south.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary is that of the original plot on which the house was constructed in 1883.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carolyn Pitts, Historian

organization History Division, NPS date 2/9/89

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The second floor has two bedrooms, hall, rear stairs and bath in the rear addition, master bedroom over the foyer and music room, hallway and two baths to the south and the new library on the east.

The third floor has, in its eastern rear addition, a modern apartment reached by rear stairs (kitchen, small room, living room with low window and a long bedroom). On the west side of the house, over the library, are four servants' rooms and a bath opening off the central hall. In between is finished attic space under the center eaves.

There is a complete detailed description of fireplaces, lighting, etc., in the Historic American Buildings Survey records at the Library of Congress.

The Stoughton House has recently been purchased by a new owner but previously had only three resident-owners. Mary Fisk Stoughton bought the land in 1882, and the house was built in 1883; in 1925, Eda Woolsen Hurlbut bought the house and land; and, in 1958, Ethan Ayer purchased the property.

Footnote:

- 1 Historic American Buildings Survey, HABS No. MA 1033, David Reiff and Susan Maycock, 1967. Project Director: Robert Bell Rettig, p. 2.

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porch did much to eliminate the feeling of spatial penetration. The view of the house from the street is now obscured by a high brick wall and open carport.

The Stoughton house occupies a flat lot in Cambridge. Richardson's plan was an L-shape, the central hall with stair located at the junction of the base and stem of the L. The stair actually follows the inside of a curved element introduced at the re-entrant angle of the ell.²

It is this manipulation of great interior space containing a monumental stair that is typical of Richardson's mature style. This freedom of space, the creation of internal and external order and simplicity of materials that made the Stoughton house immediately famous, George Sheldon as early as 1886-87, in his book Artistic Country Seats, lavished praise on the house:

One of the simplest private residences designed by the late Henry Hobson Richardson is Mrs. Stoughton's cottage, in Cambridge, Massachusetts; and few cottages of equal dimensions were ever planned, in this country or abroad, which show better results in point of convenience, spaciousness, and architectural purity. The architect has used on the external walls, as well as on the roofs, cypress shingles of a size somewhat larger than usual, and has caused them to be painted a deep olive-green. The hall runs through the center of the building, and on the left are the china-closet, and pantry adjoining. The finishing of the interior is in harmony with the simplicity of the exterior, and the effect is that of a comfortable country-house, without ostentation, and yet at the same time with a pervasive and stimulating sense of the organizing presence of an artist.

When Mr. Richardson built this house, he set the style, so to speak, for many other country houses; and since its erection, the use of shingles instead of clapboards has greatly increased, while the entire absence of all frivolous ornamentation of scroll-work, and other souvenirs of the "Vernacular" architecture of former years, set hundreds of architects thinking.³

The impact on architects was important -- it was the beginning of the modern theories of openness and coherence that culminates in the work of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Vincent Scully illustrates this connection as follows:

An example is a house built as late as 1897 on Lincoln Parkway, Buffalo, N.Y., by Edward Laney, which is an exact reproduction of the Stoughton

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House. Besides being on an Olmsted Parkway it is next to the Heath House (by Wright), 1905. The relationship between the two is revealing. Both are classically coherent forms, but the Wright house obeys a more inexorable architectural discipline than does the Richardson House. The scale is also different. The Richardson House is higher, more relaxed; the Wright house is very low to the ground, consciously forcing the scale.

The reception of the light is also significantly different. The warm shingled surfaces of the Richardsonian house break it up softly in a painterly way. The hard, red-brick surfaces of the the Wright house reflect it sharply and flatly. Beside their Olmsted Parkway, these two houses express the continuity of organically developing American architecture, as well as the important changes in that development between the early 80's and 1900. They also show up sharply in a regional sense, one as eastern, the other as western.⁴

This wooden house has long been respected as one of the outstanding domestic designs by an American architect. The work is one of several that mark the end of a brilliant career. Richardson died in 1886 at the age of 47. The Stoughton house is modest when measured against the Marshall Field Warehouse or the Allegheny Courthouse and Jail but as the architect himself put it: "I'll plan anything a man wants from a Cathedral to a chicken coop." Noted architectural historian Henry-Russell Hitchcock called this house the best suburban wooden house in America.

Footnotes

- 1 Jeffrey Karl Ochsner, H.H. Richardson, Complete Architectural Works (Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1983), p. 287.
- 2 George Sheldon, Artistic Country Seats (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1886), Vol. I, 157.
- 3 Vincent Scully, The Shingle Style (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1965), p. 96, footnote 15.
- 4 Henry-Russell Hitchcock, Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (Baltimore: Pelican, 1958), p. 267.

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Boston Herald, April 4, 1926. (Interior photograph of Fiske's library and article on contents of library.)

Cambridge Historical Commission [Downing, MacDougall, and Pearson] Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge, Report Two: Mid-Cambridge. Cambridge, Mass.: 1967.

Clark, John Spencer. The Life and Letters of John Fiske. 2 vols. Boston and New York: 1917.

Fisk, Ethel, ed. The Letters of John Fiske. New York, 1940.

Gilman, Roger. "Victorian House of Old Cambridge," Cambridge Historical Society Publications, 26 (Proceedings for the Year 1940), 42-45.

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell. Architecture: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Baltimore: 1958, p. 267, pl. 124B. Description and photograph of house before remodeling.

_____. The Architecture of H.H. Richardson and His Times. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1966.

O'Gorman, James F. H.H. Richardson, Architectural Forms for an American Society. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987.

_____. Henry Hobson Richardson and His Office. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974.

Rettig, Robert Bell. Guide to Cambridge Architecture. Cambridge, Mass.: 1969.

Scully, Vincent J., Jr. The Shingle Style. New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1965.

Sheldon, George William. Artistic Country Seats. New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1886-87. Vol. I.

Van Rensselaer, Marianna Griswold. Henry Hobson Richardson and His Works. Boston and New York: 1888.

