

STATE: Massachusetts
COUNTY: Berkshire
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**  
**(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)**  
(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

**1. NAME**

COMMON: Mission House

AND/OR HISTORIC: Mission House

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: Main Street, corner of Sargent Street

CITY OR TOWN: Stockbridge CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: First

STATE: Massachusetts CODE: 025 COUNTY: Berkshire CODE: 003

**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 type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME: Trustees of Reservations

STREET AND NUMBER: 224 Adams Street

CITY OR TOWN: Milton 02186 STATE: Massachusetts CODE: 025

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

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

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Pittsfield STATE: Massachusetts CODE: 025

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY: None

DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

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7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Mission House, erected by the Reverend John Sergeant in 1739 on Prospect Hill in Stockbridge, Massachusetts, is an excellent and little-altered example of Georgian architecture as constructed on the New England frontier. In 1928, long unoccupied and badly in need of repair, the house was dismantled and each of the pieces numbered. It was then reconstructed, as nearly as possible in its original state, on its present site, facing south-southwest at the corner of Main and Sergeant Streets, Stockbridge.

The two-and-a-half story frame and clapboard house is essentially rectangular in shape, though the eastern four bays on the rear elevation project slightly. The two interior brick chimneys are set toward the back of the house, beyond its long axis, and break the rear slope of the gabled roof below the ridgeline--an unusual feature in a frontier house of this period.

Exterior decoration on the Mission House is limited to the striking "Connecticut Valley" doorway centered on the five-bay front facade. Here, double "Christian" doors, vertical panels with bracing in the shape of crosses, are flanked by pilasters carrying a full entablature and an elaborate broken scroll or "swan's neck" pediment. Windows in the house are primarily nine-over-six double-hung sash; those on the rear and side elevations are irregularly spaced, reflecting the arrangement of interior spaces.

Inside, the building follows the basic outline of the center hall Georgian plan, except that certain modifications were made for its use as a mission house. The spacious hall, containing a broad double-run stairway to the second floor, extends through the house but is partitioned into main and rear sections. The main hall is flanked by two rooms, the parlor on the left (west) and the kitchen on the right; because of the off-center arrangement of the chimneys, these rooms are of ample size. The fireplace walls in both are paneled in pine and the other interior walls are plastered.

Doorways in the parlor are round-arched. That to the left of the fireplace conceals a coved china cupboard; that to the right leads to the small office or study behind, where the Reverend Sergeant met with the Indians. A long narrow hall, connecting with the office through the rear section of the central hall, extends across the back of the house; its separate entrance, on the eastern side, is covered by a small porch with shed roof. This hall was built so that the Indians could reach Sergeant's office without passing through the main rooms in the front portion of the house.

Above the parlor and kitchen on the second floor are two bed chambers, again of ample size and with paneled fireplace walls. To the rear of the chamber on the right (east) is a second, smaller study. In the left chamber, doors on either side of the fireplace lead to a rear storage area lighted by two windows. At the rear of the smaller central hall is a third bed chamber. A steep single-run stairway leads to a fourth chamber and a large unplastered storage area in the attic story. (continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**4. 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) **1739**

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/Philosophy | <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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Mission House, erected in 1739, is an important physical survival of the New England colonists' early missionary efforts toward the Indians. The Reverend John Sergeant, the first missionary to the Housatonic Indians, constructed this two-and-a-half story frame and clapboard house as a home for his bride, Abigail Williams.

The building has the usual center hall plan of a Georgian house with interior chimneys, except that certain modifications were made for its use as a mission house. Behind the parlor is a small office or study where the Reverend Sergeant met with the Indians. A long narrow hall, with a separate entrance at the east, extends across the rear of the house and connects with the office. This rear hall was built so that the Indians could reach the study without passing through the **main** rooms in the front portion of the house.

Members of the Sergeant family continued to occupy the house from Sergeant's death in 1749 until 1870. In 1928, the dwelling was taken down piece by piece, moved from its original location on Prospect Hill, and reconstructed on its present site. In 1948 it was donated to the Trustees of Reservations. Maintained in excellent condition, the little-altered house is furnished with mid-eighteenth century period pieces and is open to visitors.

Historical Background

John Sergeant was born in 1710 at Newark, New Jersey. He graduated from Yale College in 1729; from 1731 to 1735 he served as a tutor there, pursuing studies in theology in addition to his teaching.

During the latter years, a group of clergymen became interested in providing Christian education for the Housatonic Indians, who were largely settled on two tracts of land at Sheffield and Stockbridge in what is now Berkshire County, Massachusetts. The Boston commissioners of the London Society for the Propagation of the Gospel approved the project and the Indians gave their consent. In 1734, two clergymen visited Sergeant at New Haven and offered him the mission, which he accepted.

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Eaton, Walter P. "The Mission House, Stockbridge, Massachusetts" (issued by the Trustees of Reservations, n.p., n.d.).

Malone, Dumas, ed. "John Sergeant," Dictionary of American Biography (New York 1935), Vol. XVI.

Pratt, Dorothy and Richard, A Guide to Early American Homes--North (New York 1956).

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES	
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		U.T.M.	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds			
NW	° ' "	° ' "			
NE	° ' "	° ' "			
SE	° ' "	° ' "			
SW	° ' "	° ' "			

18.638870.4682380

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: .399 acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by Charles W. Snell, Staff Historian, 1/17/68

ORGANIZATION: Historic Sites Survey, National Park Service DATE: 12/4/74

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L Street NW

CITY OR TOWN: Washington, 20240 STATE: District of Columbia CODE: OII

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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 N/A (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)  
National Historic Landmark

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Landmark Nov 24, 1968  
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Boundary Certified: 7-2-75  
Date 7-2-75  
Chief, Hist. & Arch. Surveys

ATTEST: [Signature] date 7-2-75  
Boundary Affirmed: [Signature]  
Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Director, OAHF date 7/3/75

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**INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**  
(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)  
(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

7. Description: (1) Mission House, Stockbridge, Massachusetts

The Mission House stands near Main Street on a rectangular lot about four-tenth acre in size. In front and to the west of the house are gardens, those in front planted with herbs, flowers and low shrubs, those to the west with vegetables and small fruit trees. At the southwest corner of the lot is a one-story, one-room frame building which serves as an information and visitor reception center. Approximately 25-feet behind the house and connected to it by a grape arbor is a long one-story building, frame and clapboard with a shed roof. The western portion of this building houses exhibits relating to the history of the Stockbridge Indians; the far eastern portion is a garage and storage area. Immediately northwest of this structure is a two-story barn-like building with gabled roof, which houses a large meeting room, kitchen and public facilities on its first floor and a caretaker's apartment on the second. The above structures date from the period of the Mission House's reconstruction or later but are not inharmonious with it.

Since 1948, the Mission House has been owned by the Trustees of Reservations, who maintain the building, subsidiary structures and the grounds in excellent condition.

Boundaries of the National Historic Landmark: the lines of the property as owned by the Trustees of Reservations, shown on Land Court Plan 14051A and described in Certificate of Title 2275, issued by the Middle Registry District of Berkshire County, Massachusetts; beginning at the intersection of the west side of Sargent Street and the north side of Main Street; thence, westerly along the north side of Main Street, 115.94 feet more or less, to the eastern line of property now or formerly owned by Chester Averill et al; thence, northerly along said property line, 150 feet more or less, to the southern line of property now or formerly owned by Thomas J. Carey et al; thence, easterly along said property line, 117.12 feet more or less, to the west side of Sargent Street; thence, southerly along the west side of Sargent Street, 150 feet more or less, to the point of beginning.

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8. Significance: (1) Mission House, Stockbridge, Massachusetts

Sergeant spent October and November 1734, with the Indians, during which time they erected a building between their two settlements which would serve as both church and school. He then returned to New Haven, accompanied by two Indian boys, to complete his year at Yale. In July 1735, Sergeant entered permanently on his missionary work and on August 31 of that year was ordained to the Congregational ministry at Deerfield, Massachusetts. From that time until his death 14 years later, he lived and worked among the Indians, regarded by them as their father and friend.

Sergeant mastered the Indian language and preached two sermons in that tongue each Sabbath, as well as two in English. He also translated into the Indian language prayers, portions of the Bible and Watt's Shorter Catechism.

In 1736, the General Court of Massachusetts (the colonial legislature) acquired some six square miles of land in Stockbridge on which the two Housatonic settlements could be united and subsequently ordered a meeting house and a school built there. Four English families were admitted to the newly created village on the theory that they "would afford civilizing examples to the Indians." One of the settlers, Ephriam Williams, built a stockaded house on the hill overlooking the stragglng village street where Sergeant lived with the Indians; to this house in 1737 he brought his family, including his 16-year old daughter Abigail.

Two years later, Sergeant and Abigail were married, but not before she had made it clear that she wished to live on the hill, not on the village street among the Indians. Thus, Sergeant built near his bride's home the Mission House, a ~~spacious~~ and distinguished house for its frontier location. Though covered in part by a grant from the General Court, the cost of constructing such a house must have been a severe strain on Sergeant's slender financial resources; his salary at that time was 100 pounds per year.

Sergeant fought to maintain the integrity of his mission against the inroads of growing numbers of English settlers until his death in 1749. Abigail and her second husband, Colonel Joseph Dwight, whom she married in 1752, continued to live in the Mission House until about 1756 when they moved to Great Barrington. Following Dwight's death in 1765, she returned to the house, then owned by her eldest son, Dr. Erastus Sergeant, and lived there until her own death in 1791.

Members of the Sergeant family continued to occupy the Mission House until it was sold in 1879 to David Dudley Field, who planned to build a mansion on the property. In 1928, long unoccupied and badly in need of repair, the house was purchased by Miss Mabel Choate, daughter of noted lawyer and former Ambassador to Great Britain, Joseph H. Choate. The house was taken

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**(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

*(Continuation Sheet)*

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8. Significance: (2) Mission House, Stockbridge, Massachusetts

down piece by piece by numbered piece and reconstructed, so far as possible in its original state, on the village street (now Main Street) not far from the site of the house where John Sergeant lived before his marriage. Under Miss Choate's direction, the Mission House was furnished with pieces appropriate to Sergeant's economic status and his wife's taste, many of them dating from the 1750's or earlier. A few original pieces, including a cupboard and Sergeant's study chair, were returned to the house.

In 1948, Miss Choate transferred ownership of the Mission House to the Trustees of Reservations, a privately administered charitable corporation, who maintain the building in excellent condition and open it to visitors on a regular basis, among them history groups from the local schools.