

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

|                  |            |
|------------------|------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |            |
| RECEIVED         | APR 7 1975 |
| DATE ENTERED     | MAY 2 1975 |

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

"Louisiana"

AND/OR COMMON

Josephs (Lyman C.) House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

438 Walcott Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Middletown

VICINITY OF

1 (St. Germain)

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Rhode Island, 02840

44

Newport

005

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

| CATEGORY  | OWNERSHIP                                   | STATUS                                       | PRESENT USE   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT               | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED          | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE              | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH               | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS    | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE                   | <b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>                   | <b>ACCESSIBLE</b>                            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT                 | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS         | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED     | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT                |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED   | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED   | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT                   |
|   |   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO       | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL                   |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY                     |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM                       |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> PARK                         |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS                    |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC                   |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION               |
|   |   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:                       |

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mr. and Mrs. Frank S. Hale

STREET & NUMBER

37 Powell Avenue

STATE

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

Rhode Island

Newport

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Middletown Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

East Main Road

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Middletown

Rhode Island 02840

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Not so represented

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION                                     |                                       | CHECK ONE                                   | CHECK ONE   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input 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    |   |   |

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The summer house designed in 1882-1883 for Lyman C. Josephs by Clarence Luce of Boston occupies a high, rolling, grassed site of about two acres in a hilly part of Middletown, a water-bordered eastern appendage of the resort city of Newport, which it overlooks. This dwelling is a commodious but not pretentious example of what this writer used to call the "country-club style" and what Vincent Scully, Jr., has more recently and definitively termed the Shingle Style. It is, including the attached former stable, a long, rectangular two-and-one-half-story gambrel-and gable-roofed structure laid out on an east-west axis and seemingly grows out of the ground on which it stands. Foundations, porch-surrounds and most of the first-floor wall cover are of random native ashlar chosen in long, narrow pieces giving the coursing a horizontal emphasis, a feeling of closeness to the earth. Set upon this first floor is, in the main house, a high gambrel roof of weathered shingles which contains all of the second floor and a half-story above that. Cut in under this large and many-dormered gambrel mass is an entrance- and sitting-porch spread around the west end of the house (and now partially glazed). Spaced along the stone parapet of this porch are slender round columns to support the overhang of the second floor. On the north side of the house the porch stonework is, in one section, carried all the way up to the second floor and has an arch cut in it to emphasize or shelter the modest main entrance, reached by a few steps from a carriage-drive. This, then, is the main house: a plain first-story mass overspread by a larger second-story one which covers the cool and shadowed voids of the porch areas.

Extending west, but with a lower, gabled roof, are the former stable accommodations (now put to apartment use), built en suite with the residence, though on the north or entrance front somewhat set back from the main dwelling's elevation, An arched one-story passageway from north to south also provided an inconspicuous separation of the two. (This last constituted an early and picturesque version of to-days's "breezeway" and sheltered and concealed the service entrance.) \* The long rear, or south, elevation of the house had another accent, an extinguisher-topped round shingled tower rising high above the stable roof just beyond the arched passage, but this has disappeared -- due, the owners say, to serious damage in a hurricane.

Accents to the roofline of the main house are, besides the numerous dormers of various shapes and groupings, the two (originally three) tall internal chimneys of articulated brickwork in somewhat Elizabethan form, corbelled out at their tops. On the entrance front there is a three-sided windowed bay east of the entrance steps, and on the south elevation of the first floor a three-sided oriel is projected from the dining-room; these, plus the dormers above on each elevation and the window arrangements in the west end of the gambrel, provide the only exterior "adornment," there being really no applied ornamental trim of any kind.

(See Continuation Sheet 1.)

\* The passage was to get a carriage from the back to the front of a house, for the convenience of kitchen deliveries, etc.

# 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 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

1882-1883

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Clarence Luce

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Not large, conspicuously located, extravagantly conceived, easily seen or frequently cited or illustrated (although it was shown soon after completion in the book Artistic Country Seats and has recently received attention in the writings of Vincent J. Scully, Jr.), the Lyman C. Josephs house can nevertheless take its place as an early and important example of the free plan, the practical comfort and simple but picturesque exterior design which are the best characteristics of American Shingle Style architecture. Were it in the centre of glittering Newport, in Tuxedo Park, or in Philadelphia's Chestnut Hill, it might have had much more deserved notice; but actually "notice" seems not to have been anything desired by the owner or the architect. Privacy, comfort, air, a view and modest but attractive decor seem to have been the desiderata, and all have been achieved without fanfare in a choice but "aside" location on a hill above the ocean in Middletown. (The location is no longer "aside," as the neighbourhood is now much built-up, but the Josephs house retains its grass acreage and its view across water.)

The Josephs, a family from Baltimore, were apparently people of affluence and cultivation but not affected by the ostentation prevalent in Newport, and they occupied their house regularly every summer until their deaths in the early 1940's. Not a great deal is known about their architect, Clarence Luce of Boston, except that for several years in the early 1880's he also maintained an office in Newport and executed a number of commissions -- all of which seem to have been rather minor ones, excepting the Josephs house -- in the Newport area.

Many Shingle Style houses (and there are famous ones in the middle of Newport's "summer colony") rise from their sites proclaiming themselves as masterpieces of innovative plan and new forms of wood or stone adornment. The Josephs house is different: its true distinction is in its modesty, its kinship with the earth out of which it seems to have naturally grown, and the full but unpretentious comfort which it contains. It is handsome, but it is not ornamented; it is roomy and extremely liveable, but it is not large; it is picturesque, but neither quaintly nor aggressively so. It is quite a masterpiece of understatement (as was the now sadly-lost Low summer house in nearby Bristol, by McKim Mead & White) which achieves beauty and even elegance because these high-sounding terms were not a part of its original architectural

(See Continuation Sheet 2.

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Downing, Antoinette F., and Scully, Vincent J., Jr.: The Architectural Heritage of Newport Rhode Island, 1640-1915 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1952), pp. 152-157.  
 Scully, Vincent J., Jr.: The Shingle Style (New Haven, Connecticut, 1955) pp. 120-121.

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Nearly two

UTM REFERENCES

*UTM 18N*

|   |      |         |          |   |      |         |          |
|---|------|---------|----------|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | 19   | 309550  | 4595300  | B |      |         |          |
|   | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |   | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |
| C |      |         |          | D |      |         |          |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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 B. Harrington, Consultant DATE \_\_\_\_\_  
 ORGANIZATION  
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission September 24, 1974  
 STREET & NUMBER TELEPHONE  
Old State House, 150 Benefit Street  
 CITY OR TOWN STATE  
Providence Rhode Island

**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.

SIGNATURE Frederic J. Williams DATE 4/1/75  
 TITLE Director

|  |                    |
|--|--------------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY   |                    |
| I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER |                    |
| <u>A. P. Mortenson</u>   | DATE <u>5/7/75</u> |
| DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION                 |                    |
| ATTEST: <u>Charles Adams</u>   | DATE <u>5.1.75</u> |
| KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER  |                    |

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CONTINUATION SHEET

1

ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE

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7. Description

Were it not for the extremely skillful and imaginative manipulation of solid house and open porch, of contrast of materials (e. g., the plain, recessed wooden panelling of house walls inside the porches), variation in window-pane arrangements etc., the arched passageway, and the former tower, the entire Josephs house complex might have looked only like one barn joined to another. Instead, a residence of considerable informal charm was produced, and it so remains.

There has been some alteration on the exterior. The arched passage has been closed at its northern end and a shingled room-space built on in front of it. An inconspicuous secondary entrance has been opened on the north elevation. Much of the porch has been glazed, and the stable building has new frontal openings to allow for domestic use now. Also, a second-story room has been cantilevered out at the frontal juncture of house and stable. However, none of these changes renders the original design and proportions unrecognisable, and the house retains well its character and interest. Though at present converted to apartments, it is well maintained.

The first-floor plan is a free one, and the principal rooms are at the west end of the building. Stepping up to the porch from the driveway running across the north front, one turns immediately left and enters through a large, many-panelled Dutch-door giving into a central living-hall partially panelled in oak. The staircase, with a large landing and window-seat, rises on the front of the house just within this entrance. The hall, running north-south in the middle of the house, opens at its west to a parlour (porch-surrounded) and, beyond it, to a small (also porch-surrounded) boudoir. At the south end of the hall and opposite the library; this fireplace wall and its chimney are now removed, and the library space has become part of the hall. Opposite the western entrance to parlour and boudoir is eastern entry from hall to dining-room, and the rest of the eastern part of the main house is taken up by domestic offices. On the second floor, at the top of the stairs, is a sizeable sitting-hall or upper lounge, and there are now four principal bedrooms with numerous intervening bath, dressing- and storage-rooms. A passage west from the "lounge" space leads to a secondary stair rising to an extra "attic" bedroom with fireplace and to much cleverly built-in storage space under the eaves. On both first and second floors the eastern part of the house was for the use of servants.

Interior trim is simple, and much of it -- especially the main stairway and number of mantels -- is in early Colonial Revival style, somewhat attenuated, showing none of the Queen Anne elaborations and fussiness one might expect in a house of this date. Ceilings are mostly of wood, shallowly compartmented or panelled, or of matched sheathing. Ex-  
(see Continuation Sheet 2.)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

2

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7. Description.

cepting the lower living-hall and staircase, most woodwork is now painted, and probably always was upstairs.

The house is, in spite of subdivided usage to-day, still in a satisfactorily intact condition, and its re-conversion to one-family use -- at least in its main part -- is intended. The grounds were never elaborately treated, nor would such be in character with the house. There are a hedge across the Walcott Avenue frontage and iron gates at the head of the entrance drive. There are some large, gnarled old trees here and there on the rolling lawn space and some shrubberies -- forsythia etc. -- close to the house as foundation planting. Originally there was an ornamental rustic well-head canopy just west of the house, but this is now gone.

8. Significance.

vocabulary through taste and restraint were. So simple and earth-bound is this house, so appropriate and yet primitive its shape and roofline, that one wonders if Clarence Luce of Boston had in mind the famous old Fairbanks house in nearby Dedham -- also growing out of the ground, since 1636 -- when he designed the Josephs house. The Fairbanks house was one of the landmarks being visited in his day, and it is possible that from it and others being given attention by wandering and sketching architects then are derived some of the Colonial Revival details (mantels etc.) seen in the train of, more famous architects -- such as McKim, Mead & White -- who had been investigating American XVIII-Century dwellings and basing some of their new confections upon them.

Luce was no pastry artist, at least in the Josephs house. Here, he produced a most liveable dwelling, typical of all that was becoming wanted in the 1880's: open spaces for living and entertaining flowing into each other; views; ventilation; and indoor-outdoor living with both light and shade; airy bedrooms; un-cramped service accommodations. Interior adornment is held in check: there is just enough to be considered handsome (and it is very well-executed) but not so much as to constitute fussy pretension. There are no bulging elaborations, no heavy carvings or convolutions. Doors are plain (seven shallow horizontal panels) and are within plain architraves; so are windows, though some of the latter have leaded glass and stained-glass transoms of William Morris-like design. This is as far as the house goes toward elaboration. If one wishes to see the Shingle Style boiled down to its simplest, basic components, here is a fine example, handled with quiet, un-selfconscious expertise.

(See Continuation Sheet 3.)

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CONTINUATION SHEET 3

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8. Significance

Present owners are aware of the architectural value of their property and have retained the land that so well enhances the house. It is their commendable intention soon to restore the main part of the house to single occupancy for themselves -- and if possible to replace the round tower, which was an important visual accent -- and to have it, as much as practicable, as when it was so long lived-in by the Josephs family.