

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	NOV 29 1973
DATE ENTERED	

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

g
l
The Brooks House or (Hotel Brooks)

AND/OR COMMON

Brooks House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

and
4 High Street or 128 Main Street

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Brattleboro

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Vermont

STATE

Vermont

___ VICINITY OF

CODE

50

COUNTY

Windham

CODE

025

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
___DISTRICT	___PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	___AGRICULTURE ___MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	___UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL ___PARK
___STRUCTURE	___BOTH	___WORK IN PROGRESS	___EDUCATIONAL ___PRIVATE RESIDENCE
___SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	___ENTERTAINMENT ___RELIGIOUS
___OBJECT	___IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	___GOVERNMENT ___SCIENTIFIC
	___BEING CONSIDERED	___YES: UNRESTRICTED	___INDUSTRIAL ___TRANSPORTATION
		___NO	___MILITARY ___OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Norman B. Chase

STREET & NUMBER

Brookside

CITY, TOWN

Brattleboro

STATE

Vermont

___ VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the Town Clerk

STREET & NUMBER

Municipal Building

CITY, TOWN

Brattleboro

STATE

Vermont

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey

DATE

1971

___FEDERAL STATE ___COUNTY ___LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN

Montpelier

STATE

Vermont

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

Brooks House, on Main Street in the center of downtown Brattleboro, Vermont has been an historic landmark for travelers and local citizenry alike since it was built in 1871, designed by the Worcester, Mass. architectural firm of E. Boyden and Son in an ornate but relatively provincial Second Empire style with a characteristic Mansard roof. The brick building stands four and in places five stories high and has a frontage of 175 feet on Main Street, and, at an angle, 120 feet on High Street; it remains to this day the largest commercial structure in Brattleboro. It is 70 feet deep and forms a modified "L"-shape which might be called a "spread L," as High Street meets Main Street at a wide angle.

The central block fronting Main Street is 25 bays wide, with the central 8 bays supporting a decked Mansard-roofed 5th story of 4 bays. At the intersection corner is a 2-bay tower also rising to a 5th story. The "L" on High Street has 10 bays. There are 20 dormers in the Mansard roof at the 4th story level, 3 dormers in the middle tower, while the intersection tower is dormered on all four sides.

The Mansard roof is shingled in diamond-pattern gray slate; the top two courses of shingles are alternating red and green slate; the roof has a broad curb or skirt of copper. The foundation is of ashlar monoliths of granite, while the framework is of iron, except for the roof, which is wood timbers. Originally a 90-foot long, two-story verandah of elaborate cast iron projected out over the sidewalk on Main Street, but this was removed in modern times. Also removed were iron trim railings and finials on the decks and ridges, so the building does not have the flamboyant decoration it originally had, but quoin-work in the brick bond on the sides of the center pavillion and intersection pavillion, and the fact that these pavillions project out slightly (the depth of one brick-length), contribute to the breaking up of the smooth facade into ornamental components.

The dark-red bricks, kilned locally, are noted for their hardness, in contrast to the bricks of neighboring structures, which have deteriorated under sandblasting. The brick walls are 16" thick at the first and second stories, and 14" thick at the third. The common bond has no header courses at all. Marble is used in the exposed posts and lintels of the ground floor, and sandstone is used in the lintels and sills on the second and third story windows of the Main Street facade. Cast-iron corinthian columns are recessed into the ground floor facade between the bays.

The roofline is uncluttered by any chimney stacks. The building was heated by steam from a detached boiler room, still existing with its twin massive boilers beneath a pizzeria in the lot behind the building. Also to the rear of the building, but attached to it, are one- and two-story additions which originally housed the kitchens, bakery, servant's quarters, and livery stables. The brickwork and corbeled cornices of these dependencies are identical to those of the main structure and thus suggest that they were original, although there is no documented proof of this. The rear elevations of the main building are without ornament, and the general prospect of the rear, with its dependencies, is drab and industrial in contrast to the front elevations.

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CONTINUATION SHEET Brooks House ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The entrance lobbies and shopfronts on the Main Street and High Street sides are trimmed with posts and lintels of unadorned light marble, interspersed with dark thin cast-iron Corinthian columns. Although not completely load-bearing, these stones and columns suggest that the massive pile of the upper floors is resting upon an airy and delicate base. The stone trim also surrounds a carriage passage-way which penetrates through the ground floor of the westernmost pavillion and remains today the major access for vehicular traffic to the parking areas in the rear of the building.

The spacing of fenestration is ingenious. On the busy Main Street facade, the 25 bays of double-hung 2-over-2 sash (original) seems crowded, but as the facade literally curves around the corner into the more relaxed High Street, the spacing broadens. Also, the segmental-arched lintels over the windows of the Main Street facade are of stone, while those of the High Street facade, although the same shape, are of brick. This distinction, perhaps merely intuitive on the architect's part, points up the differences between "urban" Main Street and "rustic" High Street. The second storey windows are taller than those of the third, giving an illusion of greater height and dignity to the building. The four windows in the intersection tower have true-arched lintels or tympanum pediments, as do the 8 bays on the 4th storey of the central pavillion. Those 8 bays also have key-stones of lighter stone in their arches, giving them the effect of being the dominant windows in the facade.

Originally, the second and third floors of the "L" on High Street were a ballroom, 50' by 50' feet, its floor space unobstructed by any columns or posts, a feat of engineering for the time. As with extensive renovations elsewhere in the interior of the building, this ballroom has been partitioned into smaller office spaces in recent times.

The whole interior of the building was radically altered in 1970-1972 to convert the ground floor and second floor into a diversity of commercial businesses and offices, and the third, fourth and fifth floors into modern apartments. Virtually nothing remains of the original interiors. The original lobby of the hotel now houses the Burlington Savings Bank, and the unusual entrance bay, a "Deerfield Door" with characteristic vernacular capitals of the flat embossed "Corinthian type" found widely in the Connecticut River valley, has been replaced by the bank's modern entrance. All of the hotel's alteration was necessary to save the building from demolition and make it commercially profitable. But residents of the modern apartments, with their lowered ceilings and Formica furnishings, testify that the aura of Victorian elegance is still very much present.

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CONTINUATION SHEET 7-3

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 3

As mentioned earlier, also included within the nominated property at its western edge is the former boiler house which served the hotel. It is a small (approx. 20 x 30), one-story brick structure which was substantially rebuilt as a pizzeria in 1971, including new brick walls and a mansard roof, to the extent that it does not retain any historic character it may have had. It is not shown on the enclosed map.

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 checked="" 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 1871-1872

BUILDER/ARCHITECT E. Boyden and Son

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Brooks House was one of the largest hotels in New England, a popular summer resort, and a year-around meeting place for citizenry. Its verandah served as a viewing stand for majestic parades and afforded a view of activities along the entire length of Main Street. The hotel was famous in New York and Boston, and many elegant parties were held in the spacious ballroom. As a "stagecoach" and rail hostelry, it was a transportation center without equal for miles around. It is considered one of the finest extant examples of the provincial Second Empire style, once common for hotels and commercial buildings throughout the country.

George Jones Brooks, a native of Brattleboro, made his fortune as a dry goods wholesaler in San Francisco during the early days of the California gold rush. Homesickness brought him back to Brattleboro in the 1860's, and he commenced to lavish his fortune upon a number of public projects. Apart from the Brooks House itself, which was viewed more as an act of civic philanthropy than as a profit-making venture, he also constructed the Brooks public library as a gift to the town.

In 1869, a catastrophic fire wiped out the entire south side of Main Street bounded by the two principal intersections, Elliot and High Streets. Totally razed in this October 31st disaster were the Blake Block, originally a Federal-style private house and later an inn with retail shopfronts, the Brattleboro House, the town's major stage house at that time, and other buildings.

In 1870, George J. Brooks bought most of this charred land from Charles Chapin (see deed, Continuation Sheet 10-1), and commissioned E. Boyden and Son of Worcester, a major commercial architectural firm of the time, to design a hotel in the then-fashionable Second Empire style. The style seems to have originated, in this country, in New York City, but quickly spread to smaller cities and larger towns throughout the country. Other examples then extant which were similar to the Brooks House were the St. Julian Hotel in Portland, Maine, Newton's Hotel in Woodbury, New Jersey, and especially the Towsley House Hotel in Waterloo, New York, which was so similar to the Brooks House in general plan and details as to suggest that Boyden & Son plagiarized it.

However, the Brooks House was considerably larger than any of these, and was quite possibly the largest Second Empire structure outside of New York City. Interestingly, in the same year construction began, 1871, the plans for the nation's two largest and "full-blown" Second Empire buildings, the City Hall

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Asher and Adams, New Columbian Railroad Atlas and Pictorial Album of American Industry, New York: George H. Adams & Sons, 1884.
 Barry, Harold A., et al., Before Our Time: A Pictorial Memoir of Brattleboro, Vermont from 1830 to 1930, Brattleboro: The Stephen Greene Press, 1974.

UTM NOT VERIFIED (See Continuation Sheet 9-2)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1

QUADRANGLE NAME Brattleboro VT-NH

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:62500

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 699475 4747210

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

E

G

B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D

F

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See Continuation Sheet 10-1)

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 / TITLE

Donald Harington

ORGANIZATION

Historic Preservation Associates

DATE

10/9/79

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 11

TELEPHONE

802-387-4442

CITY OR TOWN

Putney

STATE

Vermont

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE X

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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

William B. Sumner

TITLE

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

11-20-79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

2/1/80

ATTEST:

Eric G. Dahl
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

1/28/80

Eric G. Dahl
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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CONTINUATION SHEET Brooks House ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

of Philadelphia (John McArthur, Jr.) and the Executive Office Building of Washington, D.C. (Alfred B. Mullet), had just been placed on the drawing board. These and other grandiose public buildings in the most elaborate French manner are similar to the Brooks House only in the most basic concepts of Second Empire, and hence the Brooks House and similar buildings have to be called "provincial" Second Empire.

The total cost of the land and the building thereon was in the vicinity of \$150,000, suggesting that George Brooks spared no expense in making it a superior among the hotels of New England. For its opening, a prospectus was printed and widely distributed in an attempt both to justify the construction of so large a hotel in such a relatively small town, and to attract clientele:

"The desire, so marked, of late years, to turn the tide of Summer Travel from the current of the European Tour, formerly so fashionable, to a trip among the Mountains, Valleys, and Sea-Coasts of America, is gradually producing the desirable result of causing to be provided for our home tourists the proper hotel accommodations.

"It has been with the view of aiding in perfecting these facilities for home travel, during the coming seasons, that in the beautiful town of Brattleboro, Vermont, at the head of the Connecticut Valley, and amid the glories of scenery and healthful atmosphere of the Green Mountains, there has been erected a hotel building, which, in all its departments, is the equal of the best establishments in the Metropolis."

Although Brattleboro's population at the time (1870 Census) was only 6,000, the town was a major rail transportation center and was a thriving industrial community, home of the Estey Organ Works, and was also enjoying the largesse of its most famous native son, Jim Fisk, the robber baron of the Erie Railroad. Contemporary newspaper accounts indicate that the Brooks House was a great success from the beginning and continued to have high occupancy rates until the middle of this century, when competition from motels caused its decline.

Every Main Street has (or should have) its dominant landmark structure, and the Brooks House remains conspicuous not alone because of its size, its central location at the principal intersection, and its aristocratic Second Empire style, but also because the combination of these factors give it a towering leadership among the cluster of also-but-not-equally impressive brick buildings of the nineteenth century downtown area. Brattleboro in particular, and the architectural preservation movement in general, are indeed fortunate that one man, Norman B. Chase, saved it from demolition in 1970.

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----- - , Burt's Guide through the Connecticut Valley to the White Mountains and the River Saquenay, Springfield, Mass: New England Publishing Co., 1874.

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CONTINUATION SHEET 10-1

ITEM NUMBER 10

PAGE 1

The nominated property consists of an irregularly shaped lot bounded on the north by High Street and the property of The Corporation; on the west by the property of The Corporation, Elkins, Green Street, and the Town of Brattleboro; on the south by the property of the Town of Brattleboro and Galanes (the Crosby Block); and on the east by Main Street. It is shown as the area within the red line on the enclosed map entitled "Property of/Norman B. Chase/Main & High Sts./Brattleboro, Vt." by Emory Felch.

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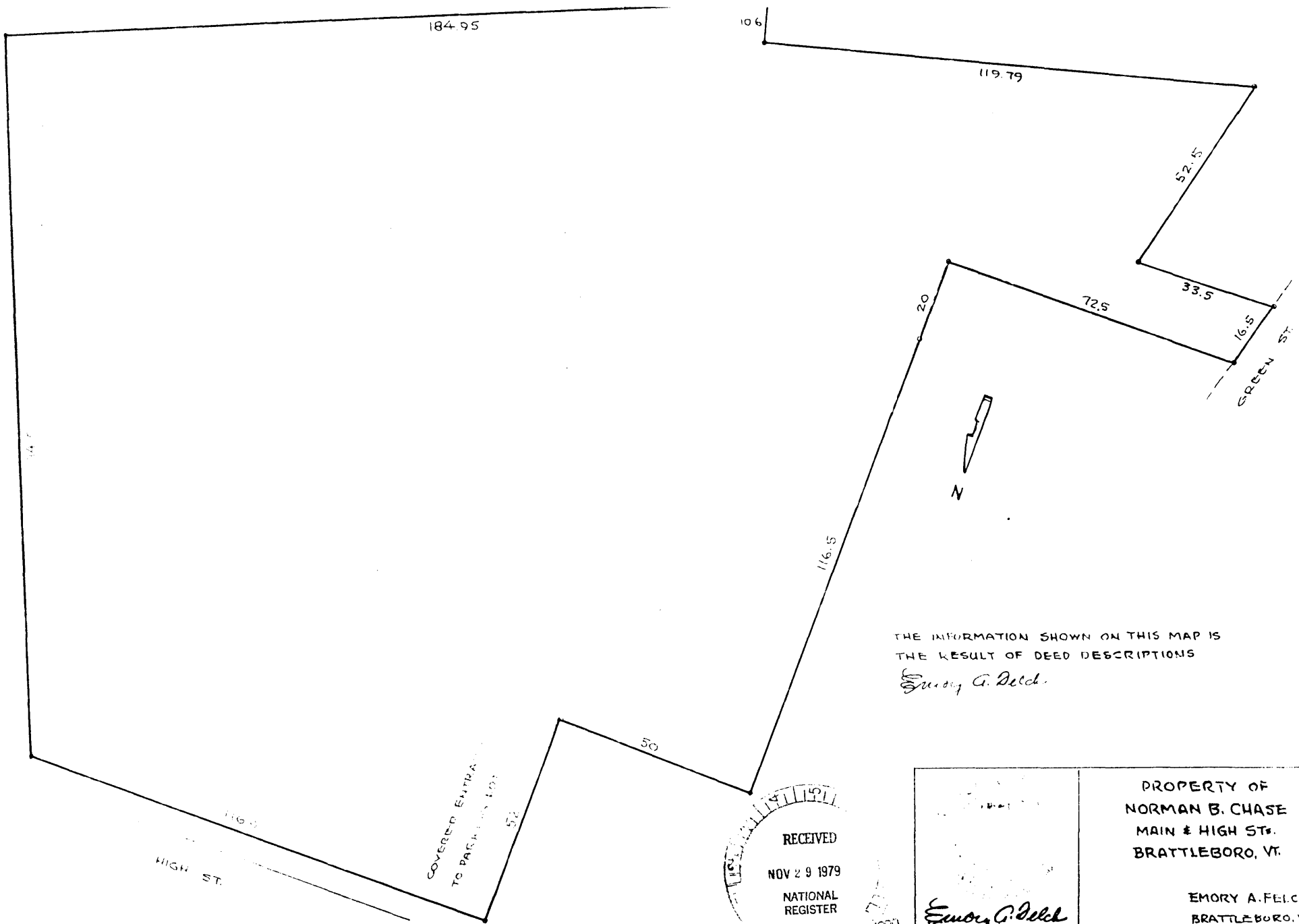
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CONTINUATION SHEET Brooks House ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

The boundaries of the nominated property are described in the following deed entered into Book 26, Town Clerk's Records, dated July 9, 1870:

I, Charles Chapin, give, grant, bargain, sell, alien, release, convey and confirm unto the said George J. Brooks and his heirs and assigns forever a certain piece or parcel of land, situate or lying or being in Brattleboro aforesaid and bounded South by lands of John R. and George B. Blake, West by lands of O.R. Post Smith and Robbins John Ritting the village of Brattleboro and High Street so called and East by Main Street so called containing by estimation one acre with sundry buildings thereon -- It being the same premises formerly occupied by my father Oliver Chapin and after his decease by my mother together with the addition of a small parcel of land conveyed to me by Asa Green by deed dated Aug. 2, 1834. Also another small parcel of land conveyed to me by Jonathan Hunt by deed dated March 10th 1831 & being the same premises conveyed by me to Joseph Clark by deed dated January 2, 1855 & conveyed afterwards by said Clark and Charles Warder by deed dated Feb. 12, 1862 & by said Charles Warder bequeathed to his wife Mary C. Warder by his last will and testament approved and established April 13th AD 1867, and recorded in the records of Brattleboro Book H p. 516. The premises are the same also which I mortgaged to the Windham Provident Institution for Savings by deed dated April 6th 1852 to secure the payment of a promissory note of Five Thousand dollars. Also the same premises which Joseph Clark & myself mortgaged to said Savings Institution by deed dated July 1st 1863 to secure the payment of a promissory note of Twenty five hundred dollars.



THE INFORMATION SHOWN ON THIS MAP IS
 THE RESULT OF DEED DESCRIPTIONS
Emory A. Delch.

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 NATIONAL REGISTER

Emory A. Delch.

PROPERTY OF
 NORMAN B. CHASE
 MAIN & HIGH ST.
 BRATTLEBORO, VT.
 EMORY A. FELCH
 BRATTLEBORO, VT.

FEB 1 1980