

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

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Item number 7

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NAME: Childs-Brown House
LOCATION: 172 Pine Street
OWNER: Robert B. Haig, et als.
410 North Broadway
East Providence, RI 02914

CONDITION: Good; altered; original site

DESCRIPTION:

The Childs-Brown House, an imposing Italianate dwelling with added Queen Anne features, occupies a large corner lot in a densely built-up mid-nineteenth-century residential neighborhood south and west of Pawtucket's downtown. The house faces east toward Pine Street; narrow strips of yard (presently covered with crushed stone) set the building off from both Pine Street and the southern cross street, Harrison Street. An asphalt-covered parking lot now occupies the northerly third of the lot. There are no free-standing outbuildings on the lot at present but a single-story garage/store room is currently attached to the western end of the rear ell.

In its overall form the Childs-Brown House is basically a standard, two-story, cubical Italianate Palazzo-form wooden dwelling of the 1860s with an attached rear ell. The exterior walls are clapboarded; a low-pitched hipped roof broken by gabled dormers caps the body of the main house. A major, but sympathetically handled, remodeling of the house (probably undertaken in 1893-94) added the projecting single-story solarium on the building's southern side and, perhaps the two-story bay window and the other projecting elements on the opposite (northern) flank; one or more twentieth-century additions have been made on the northern side of the rear ell. Surviving original exterior details include the heavily bracketed eaves cornice, the bracketed single-story front porch, and the typically Italianate window enframements. The exterior detailing of the several presumed additions is actually very close in character to that of the original work, thus tying these later elements into the earlier design of the body of the house.

Inside the main house, the floor plan follows a variation of the traditional central-hallway layout, with a slightly offset semi-elliptical staircase set behind an archway in the back portion of the hall. North of the hallway, a pair of rooms are separated by an interior chimney stack and closets; south of the hallway, what is now a single open room was probably once a double parlor. Upstairs, another central hallway gives access to the principal chambers in the main house. The western ell contains a back stairhall whose present form likely dates from the 1890s and

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a succession of ancillary rooms, each of which is more or less remodeled.

The most notable original interior feature is the handsome black walnut main staircase--a characteristically mid-nineteenth-century design which sweeps upward from a massive, faceted newel. This solid staircase is complimented by the original, heavily molded standing trim and paneled doors which still survive through much of the main house, and by the molded plaster ceiling cornices and central medallions which can also be found in many rooms. (Many of these medallions, unfortunately, were recently damaged when vandals ripped out the chandeliers then suspended from them.) Another interior feature which might well be original is the set of unusual tubular radiators found scattered throughout the house, many of them still capped with shaped marble tops.

Later interior features of note include: the (cherry?) Queen Anne mantelpiece in the northeastern front room on the first floor; the unusual full-length mirror in its Queen Anne enframement in the southern first-floor room; the oak back staircase in the Queen Anne style; the parquet floor in the northwestern ground-floor room; and the extensive painted graining found on the doors and standing trim of the ell--all of these features presumably date from the 1890s remodeling. (Another notable feature which would have dated from this 1890s remodeling was the round-head stained-glass window which formerly graced the back stairhall. This, too, was stolen while the house standing vacant several years ago.) The northwestern ground-floor room, in addition, was remodeled again early in this century (probably in the 1910s). Prominent features of this remodeling are the two-tiered oak mantelpiece, the paneled oak wainscot, and the pressed tin ceiling.

PERIOD: 1800-1899

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Industry

SPECIFIC DATES: 1868-69, c. 1893-94 et seq.

ARCHITECT: Unknown

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Childs-Brown House is architecturally significant as a fine and unusual example of a good, late Italianate upper-class dwelling house given a sympathetic, late nineteenth-century Queen Anne remodeling. The house is possesses of local historical significance, as well, as the long-time home of James Brown (the son of James S. Brown and grandson of Sylvanus Brown) who carried on the Brown family tradition of first-class textile-machinery-building in Pawtucket.

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The Childs-Brown House was erected in 1868-69 as the home of Alfred L. Childs, partner in Dispeau & Childs, Pawtucket ice dealers. Child's widow lost possession of the heavily mortgaged property in 1886; the house passed through two short-term owners before it was purchased by Susan A. Brown, wife of James Brown, in 1887. The Browns had moved into the house by 1889 and they would remain there until 1911.

James Brown represented the third generation in a prominent Pawtucket family of machinists. His grandfather, Sylvanus Brown, was a talented mechanic best known for his work reconstructing Moses Brown's cotton spinning machinery for Samuel Slater. His father, James S. Brown, was an innovative textile machinery designer and the founder of the well-known machinery-building firm, James S. Brown & Company. By 1876, James S. Brown & Company employed over 250 men in its extensive manufacturing plant (listed in the National Register, as part of the Church Hill Historic District) along Main Street on Church Hill. This was the business over which James Brown assumed control in 1879, and which he continued to run after moving into the nearby Childs House in 1889.

The Childs-Brown House passed out of the Brown family in 1911. For the next quarter-century, the house served as the home of William K. Toole, president and treasurer of the Pawtucket Hardware Company (still active today) which bears his name. From 1936 to 1973 the house was used as a funeral home; it was then operated for five more years as a restaurant. Today it is the home of the Veterans Counseling Center.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nominated property is Pawtucket Assessor's Plat 53A, lot 179, and includes the Childs-Brown House and its immediate surroundings.

ACREAGE: less than one acre
LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local
UTM: A 19 301540 4638380

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