

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	APR 28 1975
DATE ENTERED	APR 28 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

AND/OR COMMON

Malbone (Francis) House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

392 Thames Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Newport

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Cong. District 1 (St. Germain)

STATE

Rhode Island 02840

VICINITY OF  
CODE

44

COUNTY

Newport

CODE

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

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mrs. Elizabeth Morris Smith

STREET & NUMBER

123 Pelham Street

CITY, TOWN

Newport

VICINITY OF

STATE

Rhode Island 02840

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Newport City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

Broadway

CITY, TOWN

Newport

STATE

Rhode Island 02840

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE

1959

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D. C.

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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

One of Newport's largest pre-Revolutionary houses, this was built about 1758 for Francis Malbone, a prosperous maritime trader, and is located on the city's historic mercantile and residential throughfare, Thames Street, facing on wharves and harbour. The house has--for plausible reasons of proportion and style--been attributed to the architect Peter Harrison, but there is no known documentation, and Carl Bridenbaugh does not mention this building in his definitive biography of Harrison. Nearly square in plan beneath its hipped roof with a low monitor (the latter very much a Rhode Island architectural feature, and here an early example if not proven to be an addition), the house is set upon a sandstone foundation and is timber-framed within its brick exterior facing, which has applied wooden trim--some of it now lost.

Elevations are severe but ample and dignified: five bays across the front and rear (west and east), four bays on the sides. The brick walls, painted a creamy yellow to-day and thought always to have been so treated, are relieved of vertical monotony by three belt-courses--one just beneath first-storey windows and forming their sills; one above these openings; one forming sills for the second-storey windows. On the entrance facade the second-belt-course is stopped to allow for the main doorway, which has a pediment carried on half-round fluted Ionic columns. This front facade originally had projecting wooden capping cornices or entablatures, carried by consoles or brackets, over first- and second-storey windows--quite an elaboration in their time, and now gone--while other windows around the house are quite simply recessed in the brickwork. The only other embellishment of this sizeable cube is provided by the eaves-cornice, of wooden mouldings ostensibly supported by modillions, and by the careful spacing of openings and solids ... again a reminder, but not a proof, of Peter Harrison association.

From the beginning the house has sat close upon Thames Street, though surely there were originally at the sides and rear some lawns, flower- and kitchen-garden spaces, long taken over for other uses, and perhaps some outbuildings. On its interior there is on all floors the typical Colonial plan of a generous front-to-back central hall containing the stair and having doorways opening to two rooms on either side--these rooms served by internal chimneys flanked by either cupboards or room-to-room passages.

The first-floor hall is divided into front and rear halves by a semi-elliptical arch springing from panelled pilasters and has a wainscot of bevelled raised panels which is also carried up one side of the main stair, mirroring the risings of the stair's ramped handrail. This stairway ascends in one run to a landing across the east end of the hall which has a large window overlooking the former garden space; it then completes its course with another single run, panelled on its underside, towards the west, or front, part of the house. Its rail is supported on twisted balusters, three per tread, and newel-posts are heavier versions of these balusters.

(See Continuation Sheet 1)

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CONTINUATION SHEET 1

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

7. Description

The north-west parlour at the front of the first floor is the most richly decorated room in the house and retains its original floor-to-ceiling bevelled panelling, a dentilled cornice, a fireplace with marble surround and a massive overmantel with broken pediment. Here (as in all other major first- and second-floor rooms) there are also large eight-panel doors with H-L hinges and box locks, window recesses accommodating panelled interior shutters and window-seats. The south-west parlour across the hall is similar to the one just described except for a simpler cornice, an un-pedimented overmantel and the use of wainscoting only instead of full-height panelling.

Nothing remained of the woodwork of the dining-room in the south-east corner of the first floor, but it is now being trimmed with full height panelling brought from another XVIII-Centuryhouse. The original kitchen in the north-east corner contains a huge cooking hearth with a beehive oven. A pair of doors flanking this hearth leads to the service stair, which spirals all the way from the basement to the monitor and is the only means of reaching the third floor and monitor.

Second-floor chambers over the parlours and dining-room are trimmed with simple moulded cornices, door and window architraves, panelled window seats and elaborate mantels--one with a broken-pediment overmantel, but wainscoting or chair-rails were not used here. Space over the kitchen was divided between a small chamber and a store-room. Ceiling heights here, as on the first floor, exceed nine feet. The third floor is a strictly utilitarian area. Ceilings are lowered to seven-and-one-half feet; windows are half the height of those below and are very simply enframed, as are the two-panel doors.

In 1860 a small brick office annex was joined to the south of the main building, and later a kitchen wing was attached to the rear (or east) side. These two additions will be retained in the present restoration, while a chapel and a boiler room added, in turn, to the kitchen ell in the 1950's will be removed. These additions were made by a succession of proprietors following the end of Malbone ownership early in XIX Century, and some stripping-away of interior trim also occurred. However, the fabric has in general not been seriously mutilated, and the restoration currently in work for a new, residential, owner is a careful one.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input 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 c. 1758

BUILDER/ARCHITECT possibly Peter Harrison

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The high, square and handsome townhouse of Francis Malbone is evocative of the residential, commercial and social primacy with which Thames Street was invested in pre-Revolutionary times and of the prosperity and importance of the Malbone family in Newport since very early in the XVIII Century. It is one of perhaps not more than three or four reasonably intact survivors among the residences of merchant, mariner and importer "nabobs" which once lined this street, often at the head of wharf properties on its west side or--as in the case of the Malbone house--more aristocratically overlooking wharves, warehouses and harbour from the east side and having the advantage of lawn, garden and service space on the upward slope to the rear. When completed c.1758, this house must surely and intentionally have been the most imposing among those so far standing, being of brick, three storeys high under a hipped roof and carrying vigorous, academic facade adornment (most other houses then being of two or two-and-a-half storeys under gable or gambrel roofs and less sophisticated in trim).

Not only was the house conspicuous upon its streetscape, but it was also conspicuous on the Newport social scene, since the Malbones, beginning with Godfrey, father of this dwelling's builder, were known for their hospitality and grandeur. While elegance and entertainment dominated above-stairs here, certain hidden and ingenious commercial arrangements had been taken care of below: in the cellar were various niches, storage-places and passages later found to connect with a "subway" leading to harbourside. By this last means, goods could be transferred ashore without customs inspection or the payment of duty to Royal authorities, and the Malbone wealth further enhanced.

Though avowedly not a Tory, the cultivated and sociable Francis Malbone was always on agreeable terms with the local British governors and with military and naval officers on visits or turns of duty, even through the British occupation of Newport after full revolution had erupted. At that time a party of officers was quartered in the house, and, because of its nooks and its hideaways, the payroll treasury and gold of the occupying force was for a time secreted there. Until the British were obliged to leave Newport, this house was also the background for the long and patient romance of a Malbone daughter, Margaret, and Henry Edwyn Stanhope, a young officer of the Royal Navy who was placed at Rhode Island around 1772; after many interruptions and impediments due to later wartime captivity, transfers of duty, etc., the latter was able in 1783 to return to

( See Continuation Sheet 2 )

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Downing, Antoinette Forrester: Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Virginia, 1937), pp. 227, 235, 247.

Downing, Antoinette F., and Scully, Vincent J., Jr.: The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island, 1640-1915 (Cambridge, Massachusetts, 1952), pp. 5, 65, 66, 77, 80, 82, 83, 90, 104, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one acre V C

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 1 9	3 0 6 7 2 0	4 5 9 7 3 0	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 (status updated March, 1975)

ORGANIZATION

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

DATE

January 6, 1973

STREET & NUMBER

Old State House, 150 Benefit Street

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island 02903

## 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

*Frederick E. Williams*

4/1/75

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

4/28/75

ATTEST:

DATE

APR 24 1975

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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CONTINUATION SHEET 2

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

8. Significance.

Newport and take home his bride, who became Lady Stanwell. In 1780 the city underwent a new occupation by military forces sent under the French-American alliance, and according to the billeting list of the French army, Vicomte Desandrouins, colonel in command of the engineer corps, was quartered in the Malbone house, then numbered 28 Thames Street.

Subsequent proprietors and occupants were Francis Malbone, II, United States Senator in 1809, and then William T. Malbone; but family ownership ended with a sale in 1827. The house (with outbuildings then recorded) was in 1832 acquired by Colonel Joseph G. Totten of the U. S. Army, in Newport to supervise the completion of Fort Adams. After his ownership it passed through several hands until purchased in 1910 by a Roman Catholic sisterhood, for use until 1968 as The Saint Clare Home for the Aged. In this latter year the house, by this time minus surrounding land or dependencies, was acquired by Mrs. Elizabeth Morris Smith, who is undertaking carefully to restore it for her own residential use. Thus preserved, this structure of architectural and historical distinction will be a reminder--if only a remainder--of the original appearance, quality and character of old, important and now-distintegrated Thames Street.