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NATIONAL REGISTER

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name 17 Cranston Street  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 17 Cranston Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Boston (Jamaica Plain) N/A vicinity  
state Massachusetts code 025 county Suffolk code 025 zip code \_\_\_\_\_

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	<u>1</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Shirley F. Lalumaga  
Signature of certifying official SHPC Date July 26, 1987  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - single dwelling

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian - Italianate

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stonewalls Asphalt/Woodroof Slate

other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Located in the Boston neighborhood of Jamaica Plain, 17 Cranston Street is sited in a residential area on high ground atop a ridge formerly known as Cedar Hill, overlooking the commercial node of Hyde Square at the intersection of Perkins and Centre Streets. Built as a single family dwelling, the house is in good condition and occupies roughly half of its lot, which measures 4,128 square feet.

17 Cranston Street, built in 1871, is a unique and flamboyant wood frame residence. Carpenter Gothic and Italianate design motifs characterize its detail, while its format defies classification in traditional building terms. Built on a tri-hexagonal plan approximating a "Y," the house's axes thrust north, east-southeast, toward Hyde Square, facing onto Cranston Street, and west-southwest, toward the cliff delineating the rear of the property. Standing two stories above street level, the house is surmounted by a central, hexagonal cupola.

Changes to the building's early appearance have been relatively minimal and include the addition of asphalt siding. The structure's one addition, an enclosed porch that extends to the roadside from the original front door, though quite prominent, makes some gesture to the original elements. A short driveway passes to the north side of the house. Surrounding the property is a chainlink fence. At the cliffside there is a small shed traceable to a building permit issued in 1919 to a contemporary resident.

From the cupola the house commands a dramatic panoramic view of Boston and environs. This vista is obscured somewhat in the southeast by an 1870 structure and neighboring homes of slightly later construction. The trees that gave the hill its name may have originally provided seclusion for the house, and adjacent triple-deckers have visually crowded it from 1901 on. The early 1970s saw the demolition of two dwellings that once stood on the next lot to the north.

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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 17 Cranston Street, Boston (Jamaica Plain)

In addition to the two stories seen facing Cranston Street, number 17 reveals another semi-excavated ground floor accessed at the rear of the sloping plot by a projecting, one-story entry. The foundation of the house is bedrock in the front. Aside from the oak and pine used for the exterior and underlying balloon frame, there is a cement-coated rubble course that constitutes the ground floor wall to the rear.

This structure exhibits a series of consciously repeated, interrelated motifs. The triangular peaked casement window "folds" across the convex corners of each of the three bays, alternately at first-second-first floor levels, and becomes the dominant rhythmic element. Twice within the opening pattern of the first floor, its shape is used to create a door. The main street side entrance consists of two heavy french-style doors pierced by twelve window panes (two across, six down), the top row of each peaked to repeat the outline of the doorway. A third, no longer used, rear door is suspended a few feet over the ground of the back yard; its original stoop and stairs have been removed. This door and the windows of the first and second floors have been fitted with rectangular storm screens, which to some degree obscure their unusual forms and make the hexagonal, stained-glass detail set in their peaks only noticeable from within the house.

Below the cupola, each of the three axes of the slate roof is hipped and extended by a gabled wall dormer, which frames a second-floor window. The heaviness of this accent is echoed by the thick, molded trim of the other openings on the facade. The transition from wall to roof is made by a deep, flushboard cornice, the curve of which is enhanced by fancifully cut and rounded, single leaf brackets.

An unexpected and delightful decorative statement is found underneath the 1930s asphalt siding. Interlocking wooden, hexagonal panels cover the exterior of the first and second stories. Each unit measures 12 1/4" along a single bevelled side, the six of which are alternately fitted with a groove or spline. Spot checks indicate that though shrinkage and cracking have occurred, this "tiling" is intact.

The focal cupola serves to summarize 17 Cranston Street's distinctive, architectural blend. Each of its six faces is perforated by a triangular, single casement window, reflecting in two dimensions the three-dimensional treatment of those below. Siding is polychromatic slate, cut in a fishscale pattern. The carved foliate detail of the brackets visually supporting the main roof is repeated by a thick vergeboard running beneath the cupola's scalloped rim. The cupola's rooftop is flat and contains a hexagonal skylight/access porthole. Aligned with the cupola windows, the blunt peaks of the roof may have been intended to have further finial ornamentation.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2 17 Cranston Street, Boston (Jamaica Plain)

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The later (ca. 1957) front porch addition displays a sensitivity to elements existing in the main structure. Its general configuration approximates that of the original dwelling, but the windows and outer door are rectangular in form.

The interior, as revealed through photographs, retains original elements such as a winding stair with balustered railing. Further investigation is required to determine the extent of the original fabric, some of which has been altered by later paneling additions.

A shed fills a large part of the backyard and sits near the edge of the cliff at the rear of the property.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

 nationally  statewide  locallyApplicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  DCriteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Community Planning  
and Development

Period of Significance

ca. 1891-1925

Significant Dates

ca. 1871

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Scott Archibald

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Number 17 Cranston Street is significant as an architecturally unique dwelling in the city of Boston, maintaining much of its original Italianate/Carpenter Gothic appearance and extraordinary form. The building's historical significance lies in its association with the rapid development of Boston's streetcar suburbs in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It possesses integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship and meets criteria A and C of the National Register of Historic Places.

During the period when Boston annexed first Roxbury and then West Roxbury, subdivision occurred rapidly along the former boundaries. House lots were carved out of farmland along Sheridan Avenue, which straddled the former Boston and West Roxbury line. The avenue crept upward across the north face of Cedar Hill where hillside vistas made development attractive.

Deed and mortgage records indicate that John and Archibald Scott, in 1871, acquired a lot of land at 17 Cranston Street (then named Terrace Avenue) from Boston builder Timothy F. Bowe. Bowe had purchased property and laid out Terrace Avenue (which became Cranston St.) in 1870, and soon thereafter he was putting up houses nearby on Cedar Hill. The narrow lane had houses standing on eighteen of its twenty-two lots by 1874. Generally, these were small-scale, clapboard-sided, with slate-covered mansard roofs.

At the site of 17 Cranston Street, the lot and buildings thereon were under mortgage from the Scotts to Bowe, who assigned the mortgage to other parties, including Somerville bookkeeper William Locke, with provisions for sale of the property at public auction if the Scotts defaulted. Default did occur and in 1874, announcements of the mortgagee's sale were published in the Boston Globe and the Norfolk County Gazette. Locke, at that time, became the owner.

The evidence in the deeds as well as Bowe's background as a brick mason and the rather straightforward style of residences attributed to him seem to rule him out as the builder of the highly individualistic house at 17 Cranston St. On the other hand, Archibald Scott (b. 1831, Nova Scotia, Canada) was listed as early as 1860 as an organ factory worker, and in 1870 as an organ builder, and during the 1870s alternately as a carpenter and organ builder. He may have been responsible for the design of the house, which does display an eccentric attitude toward architectural form and a vigorous handling of shape and detail that may indicate a building tradition outside that of housing construction.

See continuation sheet

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Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1 17 Cranston Steet, Boston (Jamaica Plain)

Apparently, neither Archibald nor John Scott lived at 17 Cranston Street, and city directory listings reveal that between 1860 and 1880, Archibald Scott resided at a number of different lower Roxbury addresses. Number 17 Cranston Street did not enjoy any long-term continuing ownership as the house changed hands many times between 1874 and 1914.

Non-owner occupants seem to have dominated the occupancy pattern until the early 1900s. From 1876 to 1879, the Sloan family leased the house. Father and son were piano makers. Scandinavian newspapers found in the attic provide evidence of this period of boarders.

Early records list the property as being 4,263 square feet in size; it measures only 4,128 now. The trees growing out from the ledge seem to indicate a hedge once ran along the rear of the lot, now victim to land erosion.

The Seamans purchased the house in 1925 and are believed to be responsible for the asphalt siding.

In the 1940s the house was sold to the Barrys, who in turn sold to Mr. and Mrs. Bean. A photograph provided by a local realtor shows the house without the front entry porch, taken before Mr. and Mrs. Magee's purchase in 1957. It appears they are also responsible for the chainlink fence and the installation of the storm windows.

In 1980 the present owner, Jonathan Raisz, acquired the house. He bought the adjacent lot to the north in 1982 and is planning to improve the house as funds become available.

The initial impression one receives from the structure is that of its eccentric polygonal forms. Influence of the octagonal house fad of the mid-1800s is possible. Noted phrenologist and publisher Orson Fowler wrote A Home for All, published in 1848, advocating the eight-sided house as the way for every man to be able to control at least those domestic aspects of his lifestyle. He emphasized economy through a construction method involving "plank walls": timbers horizontally stacked to define the structure's sides. In addition to creating a strong, insulating wall, such a format was considered to closely resemble the perfection of the circle and contain a maximum interior space using a minimum of peripheral building material. Fowler also endorsed many then-modern conveniences such as hot air furnaces, dumbwaiters, ventilators, and indoor water closets.

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Section number 8 Page 2 17 Cranston Street, Boston (Jamaica Plain)

While a few octagonal houses patterned after his suggestions appeared during the next few decades, they were not for the most part built by the intended modest income owner. One known example of an essentially octagonal dwelling is 118 Cushing Ave. (Jones' Hill area of Dorchester, Boston). The house at number 17 Cranston St. is unique in Boston.

If indeed Scott referred to Fowler's manual, he chose to do several things differently. The basic unit chosen was the hexagon rather than the octagon. Limited research into other six-sided buildings turned up only one: the Hexagon House in Mineral Wells, Texas, which postdates this structure by a quarter of a century.

Scott also chose balloon-frame construction over plank walls as did many otherwise devoted Fowler followers. The biggest variance Scott makes from the theorems of the octagonal mode is the extravagant decorative treatment the house received, inside and out. In keeping with the implied purism of basic geometrics, Fowler did not intend that his design's simplicity be cluttered with such spectacular ornamentation as seen on 17 Cranston Street.

The foliate brackets and vergeboard, the prominent hooded molding of the openings on the facade, and the folded version of a triangular arched casement window are in keeping with the more expensive nature of the earlier Gothic Revival trends. More contemporary Victorian overtones are evidenced by the apparent juggling of opposites of form (organic and geometric), the polychromatic slate, and the more massive, overall treatment of trim detail.

Initial paint analysis indicates that the wooden, hexagonal pieces patterning the exterior seem to have been given a multiple-part paint application that made their original finish brown and stonelike. Their masonry like bevel appears to support this interpretation. The contrasting heavy watertable and hooded trim may have sported a light-toned version of the same sort of painting. The effect could then be seen to approach another theme, that of the church.

As an organ carpenter, Archibald Scott would certainly have had contact with the current religious aesthetic. The interior of this house may have drawn on it. Elements such as the dark stain applied to highly ornate moldings, vaulted ceilings on the first and second floors, the radiating format of the wings, and the stained glass detail suggest the influence of ecclesiastical academic purism on everyday life.

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## **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 3 17 Cranston Street, Boston (Jamaica Plain)

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**Archaeological potential:**

It is doubtful that the house lot at 17 Cranston Street contains archaeological data that meet any of the National Register criteria of significance. Because of absentee ownership during the nineteenth century, any archaeological deposits from this period could probably not be associated with identified resident households. Much of the lot is covered with structures, and portions of the site are either eroded or consist of bedrock.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than one acre  
QUAD: Boston South SCALE 1:25000

UTM References

A 19 326150 4687325  
 Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property conforms to Boston Assessor's Parcel #19/00204/000 (attached).

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The bounds of the nominated property are the historic boundaries of the lot purchased by John and Archibald Scott in 1871.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Carol Kennedy, Director of Survey and Planning, Boston Landmarks Commission, with  
 organization Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director, date June 1987  
 street & number Massachusetts Historical Commission telephone 617-727-8470  
 city or town 80 Boylston Street, Boston, state MA zip code 02116

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1 17 Cranston Street, Boston (Jamaica Plain)

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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

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continued

United States Department of the Interior  
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Section number 9 Page 2 17 Cranston Street, Boston (Jamaica Plain)

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Section number 9 Page 3 17 Cranston Street, Boston (Jamaica Plain)

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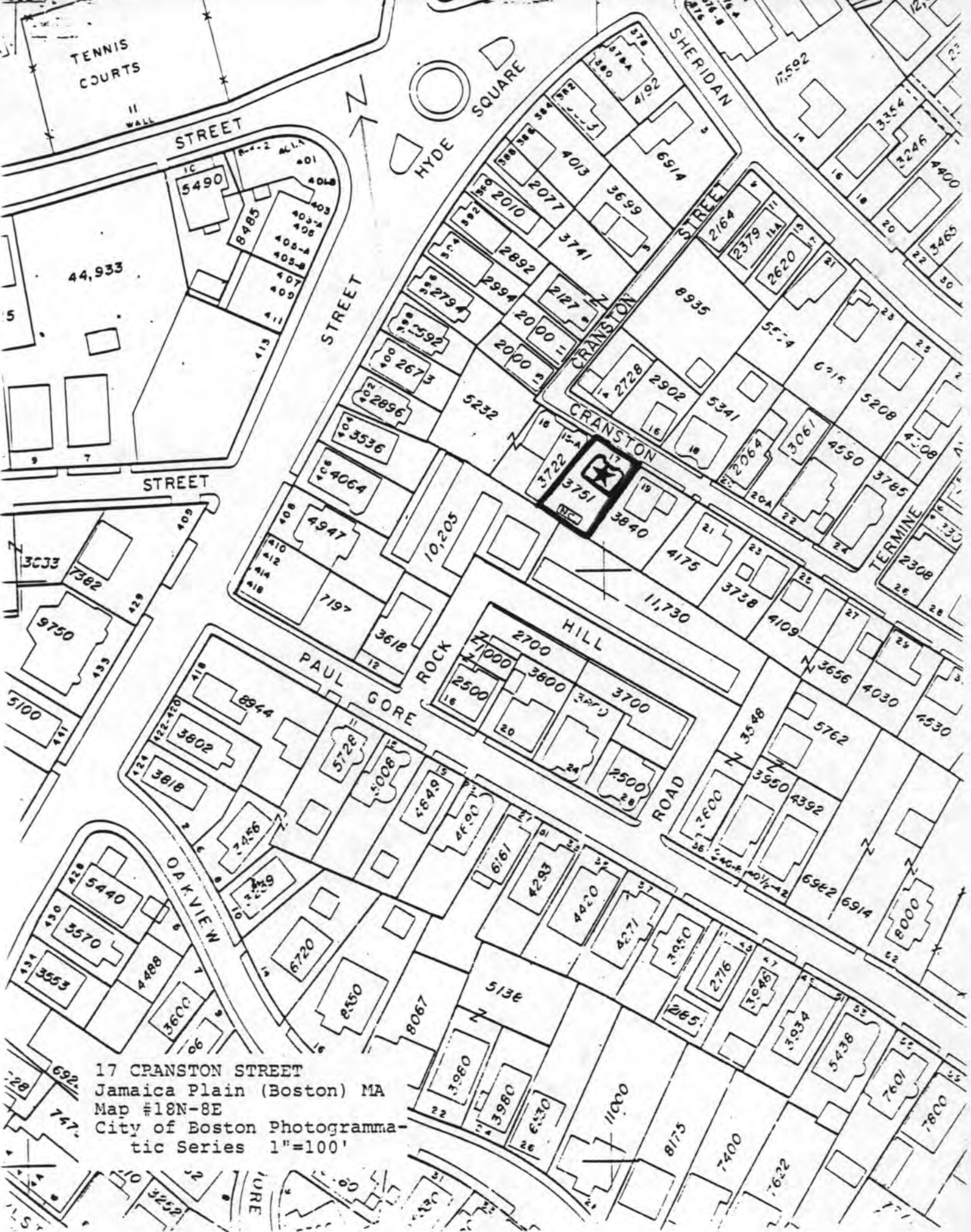
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87001398

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

House at 17 Cranston Street  
Suffolk County  
MASSACHUSETTS

Substantive Review

Working No. JUL 24 1987

Fed. Reg. Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Due: 8/20/87 - 9/7/87

Action: ACCEPT

RETURN 9-4-87

REJECT \_\_\_\_\_

Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review:  sample  request  appeal  NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria: Return  
 Reviewer: Swasey  
 Discipline: Architectural History  
 Date: 9/4/87  
 \_\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for:  technical corrections cited below  
 substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

7. Description

Condition

<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection

8. Significance

Period Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect  
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- applicable criteria
- justification of areas checked
- relating significance to the resource
- context
- relationship of integrity to significance
- justification of exception
- other

Community planning is unjustified as an area of significance. Please substantiate the impact on community planning & development conveyed by this house, or delete it as an applicable area of significance in the resubmission. If it can not be further justified, please delete references to criterion A also.

In the date of 1891 a typo under period of significance? Should it read ca. 1871-1925? please clarify and revise as necessary.

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_  
Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_  
UTM References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ state \_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

13. Other

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to Patty Savage (202) 343-9550

Signed Patrick Anders Date 9/4/90 Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

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National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER

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historic name 17 Cranston Street  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 17 Cranston Street N/A not for publication  
city, town Boston (Jamaica Plain) N/A vicinity  
state Massachusetts code 025 county Suffolk code 025 zip code \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	<u>1</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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Valerie A. Talmage  
Signature of certifying official shpo Date July 20, 1987  
Massachusetts Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register. Patrick W. Andrews 11/20/82  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:)  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic - single dwelling

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stonewalls Asphalt/Woodroof Slate

other \_\_\_\_\_

Late Victorian - Italianate

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Located in the Boston neighborhood of Jamaica Plain, 17 Cranston Street is sited in a residential area on high ground atop a ridge formerly known as Cedar Hill, overlooking the commercial node of Hyde Square at the intersection of Perkins and Centre Streets. Built as a single family dwelling, the house is in good condition and occupies roughly half of its lot, which measures 4,128 square feet.

17 Cranston Street, built in 1871, is a unique and flamboyant wood frame residence. Carpenter Gothic and Italianate design motifs characterize its detail, while its format defies classification in traditional building terms. Built on a tri-hexagonal plan approximating a "Y," the house's axes thrust north, east-southeast, toward Hyde Square, facing onto Cranston Street, and west-southwest, toward the cliff delineating the rear of the property. Standing two stories above street level, the house is surmounted by a central, hexagonal cupola.

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 17 Cranston Street, Boston (Jamaica Plain)

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In addition to the two stories seen facing Cranston Street, number 17 reveals another semi-excavated ground floor accessed at the rear of the sloping plot by a projecting, one-story entry. The foundation of the house is bedrock in the front. Aside from the oak and pine used for the exterior and underlying balloon frame, there is a cement-coated rubble course that constitutes the ground floor wall to the rear.

This structure exhibits a series of consciously repeated, interrelated motifs. The triangular peaked casement window "folds" across the convex corners of each of the three bays, alternately at first-second-first floor levels, and becomes the dominant rhythmic element. Twice within the opening pattern of the first floor, its shape is used to create a door. The main street side entrance consists of two heavy french-style doors pierced by twelve window panes (two across, six down), the top row of each peaked to repeat the outline of the doorway. A third, no longer used, rear door is suspended a few feet over the ground of the back yard; its original stoop and stairs have been removed. This door and the windows of the first and second floors have been fitted with rectangular storm screens, which to some degree obscure their unusual forms and make the hexagonal, stained-glass detail set in their peaks only noticeable from within the house.

Below the cupola, each of the three axes of the slate roof is hipped and extended by a gabled wall dormer, which frames a second-floor window. The heaviness of this accent is echoed by the thick, molded trim of the other openings on the facade. The transition from wall to roof is made by a deep, flushboard cornice, the curve of which is enhanced by fancifully cut and rounded, single leaf brackets.

An unexpected and delightful decorative statement is found underneath the 1930s asphalt siding. Interlocking wooden, hexagonal panels cover the exterior of the first and second stories. Each unit measures 12 1/4" along a single bevelled side, the six of which are alternately fitted with a groove or spline. Spot checks indicate that though shrinkage and cracking have occurred, this "tiling" is intact.

The focal cupola serves to summarize 17 Cranston Street's distinctive, architectural blend. Each of its six faces is perforated by a triangular, single casement window, reflecting in two dimensions the three-dimensional treatment of those below. Siding is polychromatic slate, cut in a fishscale pattern. The carved foliate detail of the brackets visually supporting the main roof is repeated by a thick vergeboard running beneath the cupola's scalloped rim. The cupola's rooftop is flat and contains a hexagonal skylight/access porthole. Aligned with the cupola windows, the blunt peaks of the roof may have been intended to have further finial ornamentation.

Continued

7/24/87

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2 17 Cranston Street, Boston (Jamaica Plain)

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The later (ca. 1957) front porch addition displays a sensitivity to elements existing in the main structure. Its general configuration approximates that of the original dwelling, but the windows and outer door are rectangular in form.

The interior, as revealed through photographs, retains original elements such as a winding stair with balustered railing. Further investigation is required to determine the extent of the original fabric, some of which has been altered by later paneling additions.

A shed fills a large part of the backyard and sits near the edge of the cliff at the rear of the property.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

 nationally  statewide  locallyApplicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  DCriteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
  
  
  
  
  

Period of Significance

ca. 1871- 1925  
  

Significant Dates

ca. 1871  
  

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
  

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Scott Archibald  
  
  
  

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Number 17 Cranston Street is significant as an architecturally unique dwelling in the city of Boston, maintaining much of its original Italianate/Carpenter Gothic appearance and extraordinary form. The building's historical significance lies in its association with the rapid development of Boston's streetcar suburbs in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. It possesses integrity of location, design, materials, and workmanship and meets criteria C of the National Register of Historic Places.

During the period when Boston annexed first Roxbury and then West Roxbury, subdivision occurred rapidly along the former boundaries. House lots were carved out of farmland along Sheridan Avenue, which straddled the former Boston and West Roxbury line. The avenue crept upward across the north face of Cedar Hill where hillside vistas made development attractive.

Deed and mortgage records indicate that John and Archibald Scott, in 1871, acquired a lot of land at 17 Cranston Street (then named Terrace Avenue) from Boston builder Timothy F. Bowe. Bowe had purchased property and laid out Terrace Avenue (which became Cranston St.) in 1870, and soon thereafter he was putting up houses nearby on Cedar Hill. The narrow lane had houses standing on eighteen of its twenty-two lots by 1874. Generally, these were small-scale, clapboard-sided, with slate-covered mansard roofs.

At the site of 17 Cranston Street, the lot and buildings thereon were under mortgage from the Scotts to Bowe, who assigned the mortgage to other parties, including Somerville bookkeeper William Locke, with provisions for sale of the property at public auction if the Scotts defaulted. Default did occur and in 1874, announcements of the mortgagee's sale were published in the Boston Globe and the Norfolk County Gazette. Locke, at that time, became the owner.

The evidence in the deeds as well as Bowe's background as a brick mason and the rather straightforward style of residences attributed to him seem to rule him out as the builder of the highly individualistic house at 17 Cranston St. On the other hand, Archibald Scott (b. 1831, Nova Scotia, Canada) was listed as early as 1860 as an organ factory worker, and in 1870 as an organ builder, and during the 1870s alternately as a carpenter and organ builder. He may have been responsible for the design of the house, which does display an eccentric attitude toward architectural form and a vigorous handling of shape and detail that may indicate a building tradition outside that of housing construction.

continued

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property less than one acre

QUAD: Boston South SCALE 1:25000

UTM References

A 19 326150 4687325  
 Zone Easting Northing

B \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

D \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property conforms to Boston Assessor's Parcel #19/00204/000 (attached).

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The bounds of the nominated property are the historic boundaries of the lot purchased by John and Archibald Scott in 1871.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Carol Kennedy, Director of Survey and Planning, Boston Landmarks Commission, with  
 organization Betsy Friedberg, National Register Director, date June 1987  
 street & number Massachusetts Historical Commission telephone 617-727-8470  
 city or town 80 Boylston Street, Boston, MA state MA zip code 02116

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1 17 Cranston Steet, Boston (Jamaica Plain)

Apparently, neither Archibald nor John Scott lived at 17 Cranston Street, and city directory listings reveal that between 1860 and 1880, Archibald Scott resided at a number of different lower Roxbury addresses. Number 17 Cranston Street did not enjoy any long-term continuing ownership as the house changed hands many times between 1874 and 1914.

Non-owner occupants seem to have dominated the occupancy pattern until the early 1900s. From 1876 to 1879, the Sloan family leased the house. Father and son were piano makers. Scandinavian newspapers found in the attic provide evidence of this period of boarders.

Early records list the property as being 4,263 square feet in size; it measures only 4,128 now. The trees growing out from the ledge seem to indicate a hedge once ran along the rear of the lot, now victim to land erosion.

The Seamans purchased the house in 1925 and are believed to be responsible for the asphalt siding.

In the 1940s the house was sold to the Barrys, who in turn sold to Mr. and Mrs. Bean. A photograph provided by a local realtor shows the house without the front entry porch, taken before Mr. and Mrs. Magee's purchase in 1957. It appears they are also responsible for the chainlink fence and the installation of the storm windows.

In 1980 the present owner, Jonathan Raisz, acquired the house. He bought the adjacent lot to the north in 1982 and is planning to improve the house as funds become available.

The initial impression one receives from the structure is that of its eccentric polygonal forms. Influence of the octagonal house fad of the mid-1800s is possible. Noted phrenologist and publisher Orson Fowler wrote A Home for All, published in 1848, advocating the eight-sided house as the way for every man to be able to control at least those domestic aspects of his lifestyle. He emphasized economy through a construction method involving "plank walls": timbers horizontally stacked to define the structure's sides. In addition to creating a strong, insulating wall, such a format was considered to closely resemble the perfection of the circle and contain a maximum interior space using a minimum of peripheral building material. Fowler also endorsed many then-modern conveniences such as hot air furnaces, dumbwaiters, ventilators, and indoor water closets.

continued

United States Department of the Interior  
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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 2 17 Cranston Street, Boston (Jamaica Plain)

While a few octagonal houses patterned after his suggestions appeared during the next few decades, they were not for the most part built by the intended modest income owner. One known example of an essentially octagonal dwelling is 118 Cushing Ave. (Jones' Hill area of Dorchester, Boston). The house at number 17 Cranston St. is unique in Boston.

If indeed Scott referred to Fowler's manual, he chose to do several things differently. The basic unit chosen was the hexagon rather than the octagon. Limited research into other six-sided buildings turned up only one: the Hexagon House in Mineral Wells, Texas, which postdates this structure by a quarter of a century.

Scott also chose balloon-frame construction over plank walls as did many otherwise devoted Fowler followers. The biggest variance Scott makes from the theorems of the octagonal mode is the extravagant decorative treatment the house received, inside and out. In keeping with the implied purism of basic geometrics, Fowler did not intend that his design's simplicity be cluttered with such spectacular ornamentation as seen on 17 Cranston Street.

The foliate brackets and vergeboard, the prominent hooded molding of the openings on the facade, and the folded version of a triangular arched casement window are in keeping with the more expensive nature of the earlier Gothic Revival trends. More contemporary Victorian overtones are evidenced by the apparent juggling of opposites of form (organic and geometric), the polychromatic slate, and the more massive, overall treatment of trim detail.

Initial paint analysis indicates that the wooden, hexagonal pieces patterning the exterior seem to have been given a multiple-part paint application that made their original finish brown and stonelike. Their masonry like bevel appears to support this interpretation. The contrasting heavy watertable and hooded trim may have sported a light-toned version of the same sort of painting. The effect could then be seen to approach another theme, that of the church.

As an organ carpenter, Archibald Scott would certainly have had contact with the current religious aesthetic. The interior of this house may have drawn on it. Elements such as the dark stain applied to highly ornate moldings, vaulted ceilings on the first and second floors, the radiating format of the wings, and the stained glass detail suggest the influence of ecclesiastical academic purism on everyday life.

continued

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

## **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 3 17 Cranston Street, Boston (Jamaica Plain)

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**Archaeological potential:**

It is doubtful that the house lot at 17 Cranston Street contains archaeological data that meet any of the National Register criteria of significance. Because of absentee ownership during the nineteenth century, any archaeological deposits from this period could probably not be associated with identified resident households. Much of the lot is covered with structures, and portions of the site are either eroded or consist of bedrock.

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1 17 Cranston Street, Boston (Jamaica Plain)

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continued

United States Department of the Interior  
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Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2 17 Cranston Street, Boston (Jamaica Plain)

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continued

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

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17 CRANSTON STREET  
 Jamaica Plain (Boston) MA  
 Map #18N-8E  
 City of Boston Photogramma-  
 tic Series 1"=100'

7/24/77

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

House at 17 Cranston Street  
Suffolk County  
MASSACHUSETTS

*Substantive Review*

Working No. 7-24787  
Fed. Reg. Date: 3/7/89  
Date Due: 11/20/87  
Action:  ACCEPT 11-20-87  
 RETURN  
 REJECT  
Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review:  sample  request  appeal  NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

*Unique, locally important representative of eclectic Italianate/ Gothic design with intact detailing, form and materials.*

Recom./Criteria Accept C  
Reviewer Jaworski  
Discipline Arch. Historical History  
Date 11/18/87  
\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for:  technical corrections cited below  substantive reasons discussed below *including decorative hexagonal wooden panels underneath the later asphalt shingling. Original return comments have been rectified.*

1. Name	2. Location	3. Classification
Category	Ownership Public Acquisition	Status Accessible
		Present Use

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

7. Description

- |                                    |                                       |  |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| Condition                          | Check one                             | Check one                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> original site |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good      | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input type="checkbox"/> moved         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair      | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    | date _____                             |
|                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered    |  |
|                                    | <input type="checkbox"/> altered      |  |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection

**8. Significance**

Period \_\_\_\_\_ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates \_\_\_\_\_ Builder/Architect \_\_\_\_\_  
Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- applicable criteria
- justification of areas checked
- relating significance to the resource
- context
- relationship of integrity to significance
- justification of exception
- other

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_  
Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_  
UTM References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

**11. Form Prepared By**

**12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification**

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_\_ state      \_\_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

**13. Other**

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_



17 Cranston Street  
Jamaica Plain (Boston), Mass.

Rosalind Pollan, 1983  
Negative filed at Boston Landmarks Commission  
Boston City Hall

Photo number 1 of 2 view from Cranston St.  
(Camera facing west)



17 Cranston Street  
Jamaica Plain (Boston), Mass.

Rosalind Pollan, 1983  
Negative filed at Boston Landmarks Commission  
Boston City Hall

Photo number 2 of 2 view from Cranston Street  
(Camera facing south)



17 CRANSTON STREET -  
JAMAICA PLAIN (BOSTON)  
Quad Boston South  
Scale 1:25,000  
UTM References 19J386150/4687025

CONVERSION SCALES

Feet	Meters
1000	304.8
2000	609.6
3000	914.4
4000	1219.2
5000	1524.0
6000	1828.8
7000	2133.6
8000	2438.4
9000	2743.2
10000	3048.0

To convert feet to meters multiply by 3048  
To convert meters to feet multiply by 3.2808

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey  
Topography by planetable surveys 1943. Revised from  
aerial photographs taken 1969. Field checked 1970  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 246  
and 248 (1971). This information is not intended for navigational  
purposes  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,  
mainland zone  
1 000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,  
zone 19  
Boundaries in tidewater areas from information supplied  
by Massachusetts Department of Public Works  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

SCALE 1:25 000

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER  
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE  
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE ON MEAN HIGH WATER  
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 9.5 FEET

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of  
the National or State reservations shown on this map  
Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with the State of  
Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1975 and other  
source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Primary highway, hard surface
- Secondary highway, hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Unimproved road

Interstate Route U.S. Route State Route

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

BOSTON SOUTH, MASS.  
N4215—W7100/7.5  
1970  
PHOTOREVISED 1979  
AMS 6768 1 SE—SERIES V814



P 685548139

## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Office of the Secretary of State  
Michael Joseph Connolly, Secretary

### Massachusetts Historical Commission

**Valerie A. Talmage**

*Executive Director*

*State Historic Preservation Officer*

July 20, 1987

Carol Shull  
National Register of Historic Places  
Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed you will find the following nomination forms:

Boston (Jamaica Plain), 17 Cranston Street  
Boston (West Roxbury), Westerly Cemetery, Centre Street  
Boston, Timothy Hoxie House  
Needham, Emery Grover Building, 1330 Highland Avenue

All have been voted eligible by the State Review Board and have been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. Owners were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30-75 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment. Comments received to date are attached to the nomination form.

Sincerely,

*Betsy Friedberg*

Betsy Friedberg  
National Register Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Enclosure





P 093 544 739

## The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Office of the Secretary of State  
Michael Joseph Connolly, Secretary

### Massachusetts Historical Commission

**Valerie A. Talmage**

*Executive Director*

*State Historic Preservation Officer*

September 29, 1987

Ms. Carol Shull  
National Register of Historic Places  
Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
P.O. Box 37127  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the following nomination forms returned after substantive review by your staff:

✓ Boston, 17 Cranston Street

Boston, Hoxie, Timothy, House, 135 Hillside Street

Boston(Roxbury), Westerly Burial Ground, Center Street

Concord, Thomas Mott Shaw Estate, 317 Garfield Road

Pittsfield, Providence Court, 379 East Street

Southbridge, Southbridge Town Hall, 41 Elm Street

All corrections have been made by the Massachusetts Historical Commission staff. All have been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Friedberg".

Betsy Friedberg  
National Register Director  
Massachusetts Historical Commission

encl.

OCT 5 1987