

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: New Hampshire
COUNTY: Rockingham
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE JUN 29 1973

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Governor John Wentworth House
AND/OR HISTORIC: John Fisher House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 346 Pleasant Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Portsmouth		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: First	
STATE New Hampshire	CODE 33	COUNTY: Rockingham	CODE 015

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) Home for elderly
		<input type="checkbox"/> Comments	

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

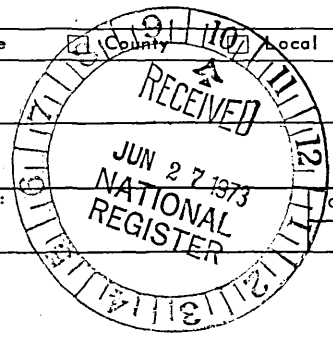
OWNER'S NAME: Mark H. Wentworth Home for Chronic Invalids	STATE: New Hampshire
STREET AND NUMBER: 346 Pleasant Street	
CITY OR TOWN: Portsmouth	
STATE: New Hampshire	
CODE: 33	COUNTY: Rockingham

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Rockingham County Registry of Deeds	
STREET AND NUMBER: Rockingham County Courthouse	
CITY OR TOWN: Hampton Road	STATE: New Hampshire
Exeter	CODE: 33

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: NONE		
DATE OF SURVEY: <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local		
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:		
STREET AND NUMBER:		
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE:



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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Present Physical Appearance: The Governor John Wentworth House is a two and a half story wooden dwelling with a central hallway, three main chimneys, and a hip roof. The front elevation is divided symmetrically into five bays, with a Federal-style doorway defining the central axis. The house possesses unusually lavish exterior trim, including a modillioned doorway portico (now enclosed as a vestibule) supported by two Tuscan columns, quoined corners, a total of seven dormers with segmental and triangular pediments, a roof balustrade, a modillioned main cornice, and an elaborate Federal-style fence with paneled posts surmounted by carved wooden urns with gadrooned bottoms.

The interior finish is still more elaborate. The stairway is one of the finest in Portsmouth, having three elaborately turned and fluted balusters on each tread, carved stair brackets, and fine paneling under the soffit of the upper run, along the walls, and under the main run. The stairway is separated from the front of the entry hall by a paneled arch supported on fluted pilasters.

The main parlor of the house, to the left of the front door, is one of the best-preserved rooms in southeastern New Hampshire. Its focal point is a carved mantelpiece having a frieze decorated with carved dolphin elements which are nearly identical with those illustrated in Plate 63 of William Kent's Designs of Inigo Jones (1727). The same room is embellished with double-paneled wainscotting, a dentiled cornice, corner pilasters, and eighteenth century red flock wallpaper (with papier-maché borders) said to have been on the walls during John Wentworth's occupancy.

The sitting room to the right of the front door is of similar richness, having fluted corner pilasters and a Federal-style mantelpiece.

The kitchen of the house is located in a wing that extends along Wentworth Street. Its chimney still retains Rumford cooking apparatus that was probably installed by Ebenezer Wentworth, owner of the house after 1810.

Original Physical Appearance: A floor plan of the house drawn in 1775 (New Hampshire Historical Society Collections) proves that the structure's present appearance is essentially identical with its eighteenth century aspect. This document, and a site plan drawn in 1808 (New Hampshire Historical Society Collections), show that there was originally an outbuilding with an office, wash house and tower in the rear garden. No trace of this building remains. The major change that has occurred to the main house was the addition of a large brick nursing home at the south side and rear in 1927 -- a change carried out with minimum damage to the original building.

bldg, Georgian

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**B. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1763**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy  | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science              | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture            | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater              | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce     | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation       | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |   |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |   |  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Construction of the John Wentworth House has been precisely dated at 1763. The building was constructed for Henry Appleton, merchant sold the property to Mark Hunking Wentworth when the house was about a year old. Wentworth, the father of the Governor John Wentworth, made the house available as an official residence for his son when the latter returned to New Hampshire from England in 1767 as the new Royal Governor. The elder Wentworth retained ownership of the property until 1770, when he transferred the title to his daughter Anna and her husband John Fisher. The Fishers owned the house and land until 1797, and John Wentworth continued to live there until June, 1775. On February 14, 1797, the Fishers sold the house to Peter Coffin, a Portsmouth merchant, and its ownership thus passed from Wentworth-related hands for the first time since 1764.

Architecture: The house is one of a group of four surviving dwellings owned by members of the Wentworth family during the mid-eighteenth century, and bears all the architectural richness associated with the other houses of the family. Each of these buildings has unusually rich joiner's work and carving, and each represents the finest achievement of the pre-Revolutionary builder's art in Portsmouth. The John Wentworth House is important not only for the coherence and quality of its original architectural features, but also for the addition of several equally fine elements in the Federal style, including the doorway and the front sitting room mantelpiece. Architecturally, the house represents an evolution from Palladian to Federal styles at the highest level of sophistication to be seen in Portsmouth. The baluster pattern of its stairway and the parlor mantelpiece are unique in New Hampshire, as is the surviving early wallpaper in the parlor.

Commerce: The John Wentworth House has been associated with a number of New Hampshire's most prominent merchants, and conveys a sense of the quality of life enjoyed by such men during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. It was built for Henry Appleton, a merchant who died in 1768. It was purchased by Mark Hunking Wentworth, described as "one of the most extensive merchants and one of the wealthiest men in New England." Mark Hunking Wentworth transferred the property to his daughter Anna, whose husband, John Fisher, was Naval Officer at Portsmouth and Collector of Customs at Salem, Massachusetts. The Fishers sold the property to Peter Coffin, another merchant, who lived there until 1808, after which Ebenezer Wentworth (son of Governor John's cousin George) purchased the house in 1810.

Continued on Continuation Sheet 1

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Caleb S. Gurney, Portsmouth...Historic and Picturesque (Portsmouth, N.H.: the author, 1902), 88-90.  
 John Mead Howells, The Architectural Heritage of the Piscataqua (New York: Architectural Book Publishing Company, Inc., 1937, 1965), 20-24.  
 Harriet S. Lacy and Jane C. Giffen, "The Governor Wentworth House in Portsmouth", Historical New Hampshire, XXIII: 1 (Spring 1968), 50-54.

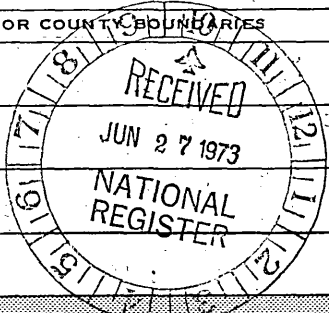
**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		43° 04' 25"	70° 45' 13"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1/2 acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



11/2/73  
1/1/73

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
 James L. Garvin, Research Curator

ORGANIZATION: Strawbery Banke, Inc. DATE: June 11, 1973

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 P. O. Box 300

CITY OR TOWN: Portsmouth STATE: New Hampshire 03801 CODE: 33

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

<p>As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name: <u>George Gilman</u>                  Title: <u>Commissioner</u>                  Department of Resources and Economic Development                  Date: <u>June 14, 1973</u></p>	<p><b>NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION</b></p> <p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p><u>Ernest A. Connelly</u>                  Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation                  Professional Services                  Date: <u>JUN 29 1973</u></p> <p>ATTEST:  <u>W. M. [Signature]</u>                  Keeper of The National Register                  Date: <u>6 28 73</u></p>
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(Continuation Sheet) 1.

STATE	
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COUNTY	
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(Number all entries)

8. SIGNIFICANCE continued  
Statement of Significance

Ebenezer Wentworth was also a prominent merchant until he was appointed cashier of the New Hampshire branch of the United States Bank. The house passed to Ebenezer's son Mark Hunking Wentworth, who carried on the family's mercantile tradition, in 1860. It was thus preserved intact as a memento of the business activities of the Wentworth family in particular, and of the commercial prosperity of early Portsmouth in general.

Political: The John Wentworth House is best remembered for its political associations. From 1767 until 1775, it was the residence of John Wentworth, New Hampshire's last royal governor at the time of his expulsion from the colonies--an event graphically described in the writings of both John Wentworth and his wife Frances Deering Wentworth Atkinson Wentworth. Certain damaged elements in the parlor of the house have been preserved and traditionally interpreted as evidence of the violence of the mob that besieged and "stove at the House with Clubs" on June 13, 1775. In this "Small Hut with little comfortable Apartments," John Wentworth laid the plans for the political programs and internal improvements that made him a central figure in New Hampshire's history.

Urban Planning: The gardens behind the John Wentworth House and the row of houses on the north side of Wentworth Street represent significant chapters in the history of land use and urban planning in Portsmouth. After Peter Coffin sold the property, it was divided into small house lots and auctioned off in 1808 for the construction of new homes. The buildings now standing on Wentworth Street were built shortly after 1808, and suggest the processes of subdivision by which Portsmouth developed during the Federal period.

Ebenezer Wentworth was unwilling to see all of the estate divided, however, and purchased the main dwelling and the four house lots behind it between 1808 and 1815. He thereby assured the return of the house and gardens to the Wentworth family, and conserved the natural beauty of a tract of land on the shores of the South Mill Pond.

