

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property
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historic name: Crandall, Prudence, House

other name/site number: Payne, Elisha, House

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2. Location
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street & number: Southwest corner of junction of state routes 14 and 169

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Canterbury

vicinity: N/A

state: CT county: Windham

code: 015

zip code: 06331

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3. Classification
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Ownership of Property: State of Connecticut- CT Historical Commission

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 1

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification
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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.

Signature of certifying official Date

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

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5. National Park Service Certification
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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 Keeper Date
of Action

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6. Function or Use
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Historic: education Sub: school

Current : recreation and culture Sub: museum
education research library

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7. Description
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Architectural Classification:

Early Republic
Early Classic Revival

Other Description: "Canterbury Type"

Materials: foundation- stone roof- cedar shingle
walls- clapboard other- _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: _____.

Applicable National Register Criteria: B NHL Criteria: 2

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : N/A

Areas of Significance: education
ethnic heritage- black
social history

NHL THEMES: XXVII - Education
B - Elementary, Intermediate and Secondary Education
5 - Development of Equal Educational Opportunity
H - Special Populations, 2 - Ethnic Populations, 5 - Women's Education

Period(s) of Significance: 1832-1834

Significant Dates : N/A

Significant Person(s): Crandall, Prudence

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: _ unknown

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

X See continuation sheet.

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

_ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

X previously listed in the National Register

_ previously determined eligible by the National Register

_ designated a National Historic Landmark

X recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # CT - 163

_ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

_ State historic preservation office

X Other state agency

X Federal agency

_ Local government

_ University

X Other -- Specify Repository: Connecticut Historical Commission
59 South Prospect Street
Hartford, CT 06106

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property: 3/4 of an acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A 19 252680 4620300 B _____
C _____ D _____

____ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: ___ See continuation sheet.

The nominated property is bounded on the North and East by state routes 14 and 169. The North boundary runs 343.14 feet, West boundary 111.27 feet, South boundary 139.2 feet and East runs 133.11 feet.

Boundary Justification: ___ See continuation sheet.

The boundary includes the entire town lot that has historically been associated with the property.

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11. Form Prepared By
=====

Name/Title: Dr. Page Putnam Miller, Director, NCC

Organization National Coordinating
Committee for the Promotion of History
Street & Number - 400 A Street, SE

Date - September 28, 1989

Telephone- (202) 544-2422

City or Town - Washington

State - DC

ZIP - 20003

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DESCRIPTION OF SITE:

The house is a notable example of what has been termed the "Canterbury type" because of several similar examples in the vicinity. It shows the peculiar roof form of gable on hip with twin chimneys, a triangular pediment at the eaves above a projecting pavilion at center of the facade, which carries a Palladian window lighting the stair hall at second floor level and an elaborate entrance doorway.

Modillion blocks run around the entire main cornice, with a Greek fret immediately below. Fluted pilasters on high bases finish the two front corners and also flank the central pavilion, framing also in miniature the elements of the Palladian window, which exhibits keystone arches and Gothic arch muntins in the large section. This Gothic work is repeated in the lunette occupying the tympanum of the roof-line pediment above, which also has modillions and Greek fret under the raking cornice.

All these details appear again in the enframing of the six-panel front door with its nearly semicircular overlight. A triangular pediment of less elaboration, with four-pane overdoor light, appears at the side entry on the north end of building, supported by fluted pilasters. Dressed stone blocks constitute the foundation.

Within, the original staircase rises at left to the second floor, and an arched opening to the right leads to the rear first-floor rooms. The front rooms to the right and left retain their original trim and finish, and ornamental fireplace treatment.

In 1940 the house was surveyed by the Historic American Buildings Survey. In 1981 the Connecticut Historical Commission undertook a thorough survey of the house. John O. Curtis, of Old Sturbridge Village, served as the consultant for the project. The study concluded that there has been only minor changes to the house since the occupancy of Prudence Crandall and that approximately 95% of the structure is unaltered.

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HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

In the history of abolitionism in the United States Prudence Crandall's efforts to educate black girls in Canterbury, Connecticut in 1833 stands in the forefront of a long struggle for equality of educational opportunities for blacks. Within the context of the National Historic Landmark Program thematic framework, the Prudence Crandall House has national significance under theme: XXVII. Education (B) Elementary, Intermediate, and 5. Development of Equal Educational Opportunity, and (H) Special Populations 3. Women's Education.

When Crandall opened New England's first black female academy, she faced strong opposition. With courageous perseverance, she managed for a year and a half to keep the school open. News of Crandall's difficulties spread across the country. In a brief time her pioneering efforts became a cause celebre, and a battle over her work ensued between the radical abolitionists and the conservative advocates of Negro colonization.¹ Although Prudence Crandall only lived in this house from 1832 to 1834, her years here were crucial to both the abolition movement and to black and women's education.

In 1831, the residents of Canterbury, Connecticut invited Prudence Crandall, aged 27 and a graduate of the Friends' Boarding School in Providence, to open a school for young women. This house, located on Canterbury Green was purchased for \$2000 in January of 1832 and the Canterbury Female Boarding School opened soon after. The school was a success, functioning with the complete support of the townspeople; subjects included reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar, history, chemistry, and moral philosophy. From remaining letters and diaries of students, the curators of the Prudence Crandall House have been able to piece together some information on how the school functioned in the house. Of the four large rooms on the main level, three were furnished as a home, and functioned primarily as the setting for teaching domestic skills. The northeast parlor, however, was furnished as a bedroom. The upstairs rooms served as dormitory rooms with some rooms having multi-functions. While every room in the house was used by the school, no room was set up strictly as a classroom. When the school expanded to twenty-four students, rollaway beds and cots were used in the ell extension at the rear of the main house.

In the fall of 1832, Crandall admitted Sarah Harris, a young black girl who aspired to become a teacher and whose father was a respected farmer in the neighborhood. Crandall immediately lost local support and parents threatened to withdraw their daughters if she continued to have a black student. The citizens of Canterbury were, for the most part, colonizationists supporting the return of blacks to Africa and were not prepared to accept a school that taught black girls to be ladies and teachers. In the face of strong opposition to Sarah Harris' presence in the school, Crandall decided to close the school but soon announced that it would reopen in two months as a boarding and teacher-training school for Afro-American

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girls. According to Crandall, "the object, the sole object, at this school [was] to instruct the ignorant and fit and prepare teachers for the people of color that they may be elevated and their intellectual and moral wants supplied."² When it opened, the new school had only three students, but soon enrollment rose to twenty-four. Most were boarders, and the curriculum was identical to that of Crandall's first Canterbury school.³

Crandall's Quaker upbringing contributed to her moral convictions and her decision not to bend to public pressure. A reader of William Lloyd Garrison's Liberator, she believed in the cause of immediate abolition. On January 18, 1833, she wrote to Garrison that she was "determined if possible during the remaining part of my life to benefit the people of color."⁴ She decided then to open the first black female academy in New England for the purpose of teaching "young ladies and misses of color." In preparation of the opening of her new school, she conferred with Garrison and recruited black students from well-to-do black families in Boston, Providence, and New York. Two months later, with the help of William Lloyd Garrison, she reopened the first black female academy in New England for the purpose of teaching "young ladies and misses of color." When her plans became known locally, a delegation of town leaders urged her to abandon project, Crandall refused, and a general boycott of the school ensued. Both Crandall as well as her students endured harassment; shopkeepers refused to sell them food, the building was pelted with stones and eggs, and, in January 1834, the townspeople unsuccessfully attempted to set the school on fire.

Crandall enlisted the aid of the anti-slavery community, which offered her much needed support. Her proponents included abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison and Samuel J. May, a young Unitarian minister from nearby Brooklyn, Connecticut, who was a follower of Garrison's. Also, philanthropist Arthur Tappan gave her money for legal council. The conflict surrounding Crandall's school represented an abolitionist scheme; Crandall's purpose was to dramatize the evils of race and prejudice. The widespread repercussions demonstrated her success.⁵

So determined and influential were Crandall's opponents, that the 1833 Connecticut Assembly passed a measure known as the "Black Law." This act stated that no black person from outside the state of Connecticut would be permitted to attend any school other than a free public school unless the town granted special permission. Undaunted, Crandall continued her instruction and sought additional pupils. Finally, she was arrested on June 27, 1833, and spent one night in jail. Her imprisonment received national attention; Garrison's Liberator thundered against the injustice and later a new abolitionist newspaper began in Connecticut along with a female anti-slavery society to draw further attention to the situation. From the spring of 1833 until the summer of 1834, The Liberator and The Colonizationist, published in Boston, had a running debate over Prudence Crandall's school and trial.

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Crandall's trial began on August 23, 1833. The jury in the first trial was divided and failed to reach a verdict. However, the case went to the Superior Court where it was decided in favor of Canterbury. The judge ruled that Negroes were not citizens within the meaning of the federal constitution and thus were not subject to its guarantees. Crandall appealed, and won on technical grounds. Despite the legal victory, an angry mob attacked the school building on September 9, 1834, and used clubs and iron bars to break more than ninety windows. What the Black Law and local ostracism had not been able to accomplish, this mob achieved. Crandall, fearing for the girls' safety closed her school the next morning.⁶ According to noted historian Leon Litwack, after the Crandall experiment and trial most communities consented, under pressure, to establish black schools; however these schools suffered from lack of qualified teachers and proper equipment.⁷

Prudence Crandall's courage and persistence won her national attention in abolitionist circles. She became a symbol of abolition; she spoke and was entertained at banquets sponsored by abolitionists and colored societies.⁸ Edward Abdy, an English social critic, commented that in "every hamlet and house throughout the Union" Americans were aware of the controversy in Canterbury.⁹ Crandall's determination to provide an equal educational opportunity for black girls proved to be the most revealing of the conflicts surrounding African Colonizationists and Garrisonian Abolitionists.

Interest in Crandall's trial continued after the Civil War. In 1869 Samuel May wrote about Crandall in his book Some Recollections of Our Anti-slavery Conflict. May described the conflict as follows: "The question between us is not simply whether thirty or forty colored girls shall be well educated at a school to be kept in Canterbury; but whether the people in any part of our land will recognize and generally protect the 'inalienable rights of man,' without distinction of color."¹⁰

The entire affair proved that the antebellum race conflict existed in the North as well as the South. Samuel May summed up the issue as follows: "The greatest question in our nation is now called upon to decide -- i.e. whether our immense colored population shall henceforth be permitted to rise among us, as they may be able, in intellectual and moral worth; or be kept down in hopeless degradation, until in the providence of a just God they may throw off the yoke of their oppressors, with vindictive violence."¹¹

Prudence Crandall was one of the first women who dared to express her views publicly, and who kept her mind active and unembittered through a trying and lonely time.¹² Historian Eleanor Flexner discusses Crandall's role as a woman in addition to her role as an abolitionist. She notes that Crandall's achievements must be placed in the historical context of occurring prior to the founding of Mount Holyoke which was in the forefront of advanced educational opportunities for white girls and

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prior to the founding of women's anti-slavery societies and the activities of the Grimke sisters.¹³

Not until 1866, twenty-eight years and a civil war after the events in Canterbury, would Windham County Connecticut vote in favor of black education and black suffrage. In 1886, the Connecticut state legislature voted to provide her with an annual pension of \$400, as partial restitution for her experiences in Canterbury. Prudence Crandall may not have had the opportunity to teach many black students but she nevertheless had an impact on the town of Canterbury and on the national abolitionist movement. She believed that black girls were worthy of decent education, and she risked her life to provide it.

¹Edward T. James, ed., Notable American Women (Cambridge, 1971), I:400.

²Randy Ross-Ganguly, "The Prudence Crandall Museum: A Teachers Resource Guide" (Prudence Crandall Museum, Canterbury, CT, 1988), 67.

³Ross-Ganguly, 56.

⁴James, 400.

⁵E. W. and Miriam Small, "Prudence Crandall: Champion of Negro Education," New England Quarterly 17(December 1944):507.

⁶Ross-Ganguly, 60.

⁷Leon Litwack, North of Slavery (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 131.

⁸Small, 515.

⁹Lawrence J. Friedman, "Racism and Sexism in Antebellum America: The Prudence Crandall Episode Reconsidered," Societas 4(Summer 1974):211.

¹⁰Edmund Fuller, Prudence Crandall: An Incident of Racism in Nineteenth Century Connecticut (Middleton: Wesleyan University Press, 1971).

¹¹Fuller.

¹²Small, 528.

¹³Eleanor Flexner, Century of Struggle: The Women's Rights Movement in the United States (New York: Atheneum, 1972), 39-40.