

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet 41

Item number 7

Page 42

NAME: Gardencourt

LOCATION: 10 Gibson Avenue

OWNER: Earl Perkins, 10 Gibson Avenue, Narragansett, Rhode Island 02882

CONDITION: Excellent; altered; original site

## DESCRIPTION:

The two-and-one-half-story Shingle Style residence known as Gardencourt was designed circa 1888 by the Boston architect William Gibbons Preston for Charles H. Pope, a New York businessman. Located in a residential area of Narragansett Pier, the house stands far back from the street on a large lot and is almost completely obscured by tall hedges and trees. It is approached by a long drive.

Large stones form the ground floor walls; dark-stained shingles cover the stories above. The gable roof, which sweeps down on the east to cover a veranda (now enclosed), is pierced by a small eyebrow window and a polygonal dormer. The gable end on the north elevation overhangs the truncated corners of the two lower floors. A polygonal dormer is centered in the west slope of the gable, and immediately south of this a small pavilion projects from the building's main mass. Attached to the south end of the building is a two-story, shingled service wing, a later addition.

The main entry into the house is through a door leading from the veranda directly into a large, irregularly-shaped hall/parlor, one of two rooms which surround a double fireplace and comprise the main section of the first floor. A rather steep stairway in the southeast corner winds to the second floor around a square newel post which tapers to a blunt point covered by carved foliage. Similar carving encircles two turned posts which flank the stairway.

On the south wall between the stair and a broad fireplace is a door leading into a dining room/living room of approximately the same size as the other room. It has double doors at each end filled with glass panes and surrounded by sidelights and a glass transom, the eastern door leading to the veranda and the western door outside to a stone terrace, a later addition. The fireplace is surrounded by brick. A door on the south wall connects this room to the service wing where two pantries and a large kitchen are located. Bedrooms and bathrooms are on the floors above both sections. The building has had interior and exterior alterations, most probably dating from the 1920s, but these have been done so sympathetically to the original design that it is difficult to differentiate between new and old.

Near the street is a one-and-one-half-story, shingled garage with caretaker's quarters, probably built about 1928 for Elise Rice, a later

(See Continuation Sheet #42)

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For HCRS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet 42

Item number 7

Page 43

owner. Several dormers, two chimneys, and a jerkin-head gable add variety to the steep hipped roof which covers the building's irregular mass. An open porch runs along part of the street (west) elevation.

The house, outbuilding, and grounds are very well-maintained.

DATE: ca. 1888

ARCHITECT: William Gibbons Preston

SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

Gardencourt was one of five structures proposed by Charles H. Pope for a large site southeast of the intersection of Gibson Avenue and South Pier Road in the late 1880s. Several cottage clusters were being developed at Narragansett Pier at this time, a trend exemplified by the nearby Earls court and Sherry Cottages (both in the Earls court Historic District). Such clusters were usually related in architectural design and often shared essential services, such as water supply. This was a change from earlier construction where each building was designed and functioned independently. Plans for the Gibson Avenue group were quite well advanced, but Gardencourt was the only structure actually built.

The group was designed by William Gibbons Preston, a prominent Boston architect, whose work included the first building of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the old Museum of Natural History (now Bonwit Teller), both in Boston's Back Bay district. Preston was also responsible for many buildings in resort colonies along the Atlantic Ocean including a number in Narragansett Pier, such as the Aaron Wolff, Jr., House (41 Gibson Avenue) and the Greene Inn (Ocean Road at South Pier Road). Both of these structures are in the Shingle Style as are Gardencourt and many other structures Preston designed during this period. The style was thought to be particularly suitable to withstand the harshness of a seaside environment as well as enhancing the casual atmosphere prevalent at a resort community. Gardencourt features many elements characteristic of the Shingle Style: an open interior plan with a central hearth; large windows and doors and a broad veranda that blur the distinction between interior and exterior space; skillful use of the natural textures and hues of building materials.

Charles H. Pope was the main instigator in the project that produced Gardencourt. A Providence native, Pope had moved to New York where he was the chief partner of C.H. Pope & Co., a New York cotton brokerage. He was active in Narragansett Pier real estate, and sponsored the construction of cottages at 350 and 352 Ocean Road in 1884-85.

(See Continuation Sheet #43)