

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Nathan Appleton Residence

AND/OR COMMON

Appleton-Parker Houses; Women's City Club

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

39-40 Beacon Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION 8  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN

Boston

VICINITY OF

STATE

Massachusetts

CODE

25

COUNTY

Suffolk

CODE

025

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER: Club

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

Contact: Mrs. Will Lessard, President

NAME

Women's City Club of Boston

STREET & NUMBER

40 Beacon Street

CITY, TOWN

Boston

VICINITY OF

STATE

Massachusetts

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Registry of Deeds, Suffolk County

STREET & NUMBER

Pemberton Square

CITY, TOWN

Boston

STATE

Massachusetts

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Listed in:

National Historic Sites Survey (Beacon Hill Historic District)

DATE

1966

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Historic Sites Survey

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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

From 1821 until his death in 1861, Nathan Appleton lived at 39 Beacon Street, one of a set of twin, red brick, bowfront townhouses that architect Alexander Parris designed for him and Daniel Parker in 1817. Although Appleton's previous residence--a four-story, brick, bowfront dwelling at 54 Beacon Street where he lived from 1808 to 1821--survives also, the Parris house boasts a longer and more significant association with him. Moreover it was here that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was married to Appleton's daughter Frances Elizabeth. Since 1914 the structure has been the headquarters of the Women's City Club of Boston, whose members have been instrumental both in preserving the residence and in disproving the erroneous notion, popular early in this century, that Charles Bulfinch designed it.

When completed in 1821, the south-facing Appleton and Parker houses, which are connected by a fire wall, mirrored each other in almost every detail on the exterior and showed only minor differences on the interior. Each rose three stories; displayed a three-bay front with the bay farthest from center curved to accomodate two windows at each level; featured a center-placed entrance; had a full balustrade atop the third-floor level sheilding a low-pitched roof; and exhibited a one-story rear ell that contained servants' quarters and stables while forming one side of a small courtyard. Since that time there have been several exterior alterations to the buildings, but the architectural character of both, particularly with regard to their front facades, has been maintained. In the 1870's a fourth story was added to both residences, but the roof balustrades were saved and installed atop the new floor. The original cornices remain at the third-floor level. In the late 1880's Arthur T. Lyman, who bought house 39 in 1886, had a center window was cut into each story of its curved bay and added a second floor to its rear ell to serve as a ballroom. Finally, in 1914 the Women's City Club added two stories above the servants-and-stable ell of house 40 to serve as additional dining space and covered its terrace to achieve space for an auditorium. Of these changes, only the 1870's fourth-story addition and a pair of 1953-vintage cast-iron connecting balconies on the third and fourth stories--similar to an earlier one or the second-floor facade--represent alterations visible from the street.

Most of the windows in the twin houses have six-over-six double hung sashes. Exceptions are on the second floor of the front facade where triple six-over-six openings prevail and on

(continued)

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# 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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES Subject: 1800-1861 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Richard Walsh  
 Site: 1821-1861 Alexander Parris

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Nathan Appleton's significance in American commercial and industrial history is threefold. In 1815, acting as agent for the Boston Manufacturing Company, he "founded," according to his biographer Frances W. Gregory, "the first textile sales agency, through which the products of the mills were successfully marketed."<sup>1</sup> Not only did this innovation insure the success of the Boston Manufacturing Company, but it established the precedent of using a separate selling house to market finished products. This method of marketing has been generally followed in the textile industry ever since.

Secondly, Appleton, according to Gregory, was "the financial and mercantile mind behind the development of the Boston Manufacturing Company."<sup>2</sup> This firm, says business historians Glenn Porter and Harold C. Livesay, "was the first truly modern factory in the United States for it integrated and mechanized production from raw material to finished product under a single management and within a single factory."<sup>3</sup>

Finally, Appleton is representative of the shift from commerce to industry in New England after 1815. As one of the region's most successful exporters and importers, he came to realize during the War of 1812 that textile manufacturing offered a greater potential for profit and gradually shifted the bulk of his wealth into that line of endeavor. Dubbed "the Great Manufacturer" by family and associates, he played a major role in establishing Lowell and Lawrence, Mass., and Manchester, N.H.,

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<sup>1</sup>Frances W. Gregory, Nathan Appleton, Merchant and Entrepreneur, 1779-1861 (Charlottesville, 1973), xi.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 172.

<sup>3</sup>Glenn Porter and Harold C. Lovesay, Merchants and Manufacturers: Studies in the Changing Structure of Nineteenth Century Markets (Baltimore, 1971), 23.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See continuation sheet.)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>19</u>	<u>329780</u>	<u>461911260</u>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the nominated property coincides with the boundaries of the legal lots known as 39 and 40 Beacon Street, Boston, Massachusetts.

### 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 Visit & Description by: George R. Adams, Director  
History by: Ralph J. Christian, Historian, Historic Landmarks Project  
 ORGANIZATION American Association for State and Local History DATE May 1977  
 STREET & NUMBER 1400 Eighth Avenue South TELEPHONE 615/242-5583  
 CITY OR TOWN Nashville, STATE Tennessee 37203

## 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

TITLE

DATE

### FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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CONTINUATION SHEET N. Appleton ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE one

the first floor of the stable ell of house 39 where six-over-two sashes hang. Many of the rear windows have plain stone sills and lintels, but all original streetside openings have white marble lugsills and lintels, the latter of which are shouldered and carved in a fret pattern. All front windows have black-painted louvered shutters.

The two front entrances are almost identical. Each consists of a single black-painted wood door set in a white-painted wood surround topped by a segmentally arched fanlight, and flanked by sidelights. Both the fanlights and sidelights feature leaded glass arranged in a pattern of intersecting spheres. All this is set under a small flat-roofed portico supported by a pair of white-painted round Ionic columns and a pair of flanking square posts. Because the houses are situated on a gently sloping street and above partially raised full basements, the twin entrances are reached by a series of concrete steps. These are adorned with cast-iron hand rails attached to a low cast-iron and stone fence that separates the residences from the sidewalk.

The front door of Appleton's house, number 39, opens into a small vestibule. From here another single wood door with leaded-glass fanlights and sidelights admits to a hallway that extends through the house along a plane slightly left of center. The front one-third of the hall is distinguished from the remaining section by a vaulted ceiling. Right of the hall is the club's common or dining room, which served this same function in Appleton's day. It features a beautiful mantle of white marble with green marble inlays and a set of Chippendale dining chairs that once belonged to Oliver H. Perry. Beyond the dining room is the former pantry, a coatroom, and a modern restroom. Beyond these is a three-room apartment converted from the former servants' quarters and stable area. Left of the hall is the downstairs library with white marble mantle and flanking built-in mahogany bookcases. Beyond the library is a closet and the main stairway, an open-string balustrated spiral that rises with continuous handrail to the top floor.

On the second floor the stair gives access to a small hallway near the center of the residence. Rear or west of the stair is a small modern bath and the original sliding fire doors that connect the two houses. The left front chamber of the second floor holds the upstairs library, which has a white

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CONTINUATION SHEET N. Appleton      ITEM NUMBER 7      PAGE two

Italian marble mantle and green-painted plaster walls. To its right is the drawing room where Longfellow and Frances Appleton were married in 1843. The curved bay of the house forms the south wall of this room, and so the rear or north wall is curved in the opposite direction to present an oval effect. From the rear wall a pair of single, carved, wood doors lead into a smaller parlor. A small office, formerly a bedroom, just north of the stair well completes the second floor.

Floors three and four contain several bedrooms now occupied by club members. During Appleton's residence he utilized the third-floor chamber above the drawing room as the master bedroom. It features a hardwood floor, wood mantle, and double closets in the rear (north) wall. Additional access to these upper floors is provided by a simple enclosed stair rear of the center hall area on each floor. Also, a modern elevator has been installed near the main stairway.

The Parker residence, house 40, displays the same general room arrangement as the Appleton dwelling except for an opposite east-west orientation. Current uses of the rooms differ also, particularly on the first two floors, and there are several differences in decor. For example, the Parker drawing room has curved sliding doors rather than curved hinged doors in the rear wall. Throughout both houses, however, there is an abundance of original mahogany doors--both natural and white-painted--marble mantles, and ornamental plaster ceiling cornices and rosettes, as well as a marvelous collection of period furnishings. Originally each house had a kitchen in the basement, but the Appleton kitchen is now a storage room. The Parker kitchen remains largely intact and still has its original Rumford Roaster.

These townhouses form part of the Beacon Hill National Historic Landmark District, but because of Nathan Appleton's overwhelming national significance in the development of early American commerce and industry, they merit individual NHL recognition.

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as industrial cities and was involved in the founding of 14 different manufacturing firms.<sup>4</sup> By the 1850's, Appleton was the largest single shareholder in the American textile industry, and a major spokesman for the industry on the National level as well.

From 1821 until his death in 1861, Nathan Appleton lived at 39 Beacon Street, one of a set of twin, red brick, bowfront townhouses that architect Alexander Parris designed for him and Daniel Parker in 1817. Although Appleton's previous residence-- a four-story, brick, bowfront dwelling at 54 Beacon Street where he lived from 1808 to 1821--survives also, the Parris house boasts a longer and more significant association with him. Moreover it was here in 1843 that Henry Wadsworth Longfellow was married to Appleton's daughter Frances Elizabeth. Since 1914 the structure has been the home of the Women's City Club of Boston, which has done much to preserve it.

History

Nathan Appleton was born October 6, 1779, on a farm near New Ipswich, N.H., to Isaac and Mary Adams Appleton. After attending the local grammar school, young Nathan entered New Ipswich Academy in 1792 to prepare for college. Two years later, he was admitted to Dartmouth, but at this juncture, he decided to opt for a business rather than an academic career. His older brother Samuel, who owned mercantile establishments in New Ipswich and Boston, needed a bookkeeper, and he hired Nathan to fill the post. For the next 6 years, Nathan received a thorough education in business methods as the firm expanded and prospered and his own responsibilities increased.

In 1800, Samuel made Nathan his partner, and the firm of S. & N. Appleton Co. came into being. "With its creation," says Gregory, "the brothers entered a mature stage of mercantile expansion, engaging in both domestic and foreign trade and in

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<sup>4</sup>Quoted in Louise Hall Tharp, The Appletons of Beacon Hill (Boston, 1973), 10.

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wholesale and retail business."<sup>5</sup> During the 9 years the partnership lasted, Nathan made a substantial fortune handling imports and dealing in such commodities as pot and pearl ashes, cotton, rice, coffee, sugar, beef, and opium. In 1809, however, for reasons which remain unclear, Samuel and Nathan dissolved their partnership.

In 1810 Nathan formed three new partnerships. He, his brother Eben, and Daniel P. Parker established the mercantile firm of Parker, Appleton & Co. and Nathan Appleton & Co. in Boston and Eben Appleton & Co. in Liverpool England. For the most part, however, Nathan conducted most of his business from Nathan Appleton & Co. and served the other two firms largely in an advisory capacity. Despite adverse conditions caused by the Napoleonic wars, trade restrictions imposed by the United States Government, and the War of 1812, these firms prospered, and Appleton's personal wealth increased.

In the meantime, Appleton had begun what would prove to be a gradual shift from merchant to manufacturer. In 1810 while traveling in Scotland, he encountered Francis Cabot Lowell, who convinced him of the potential of a large-scale New England textile industry. When Lowell founded the Boston Manufacturing Company in 1813, Appleton invested \$5,000 in the new enterprise. In fact, Appleton, says Gregory, was "the financial and mercantile mind behind the development" of this firm which, according to historian Louise Hall Tharp, had "the first textile mills to be built with all the processes from raw cotton to finished cloth combined under one roof."<sup>6</sup>

Shortly after the Boston Manufacturing Company began its production of cotton cloth in 1815, the firm encountered difficulty in selling its output. At this juncture, Appleton took charge and used Benjamin C. Ward & Co., a wholesale merchandising firm he had recently founded, to sell the mill's products. In taking this action, Appleton, according to Gregory, "founded the first textile sales agency through

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<sup>5</sup>Gregory, Nathan Appleton, 17.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., 172; Tharp, The Appletons of Beacon Hill, 63.

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which the products of the mills were successfully marketed."<sup>7</sup> In addition to marketing, the selling house, as it evolved under Appleton's direction, assumed managerial and financial functions for the mills. In many instances, the sales agency supplied raw materials, advanced funds for payrolls, dividends and other operating expenses, handled bookkeeping chores, and provided storage and loading facilities. Although the agencies eventually abandoned these auxiliary functions, they remained the principal outlets for selling mill output. Thus, Appleton established a marketing precedent that has been followed in the textile industry ever since.

By 1820 the Boston Manufacturing Company flourished to such an extent that Appleton was tempted to invest in other textile ventures. In 1822 he played a major role in establishing the Merrimack Manufacturing Company in East Chelmsford, Mass., later renamed Lowell at Appleton's suggestion. In 1837 he and his associates acquired control of the Amoskeag Manufacturing Company in Manchester, N.H., and helped make that city a textile manufacturing center. Finally, in the mid-1840's Appleton served as Abbott Lawrence's principal advisor in the development of Lawrence, Mass. During these years, Appleton helped found 14 different textile manufacturing firms and invested in numerous others. By the 1850's, he was the largest single shareholder in the American textile industry.

Appleton also served as a National spokesman for the textile industry. Elected to Congress in 1830 and 1842, he emerged as a major spokesman for the protective tariff. He argued, says biographer Arthur Burr Darling, "that protective tariffs were for the interest of the whole nation; they would increase the consumption of Southern cotton by Northern mills, replacing the foreign with a domestic market; they would encourage competition among American mills, and thus reduce the cost of cotton goods to domestic consumers."<sup>8</sup> In a series of magazine, newspaper, and encyclopedia articles and pamphlets, he not only advocated textile manufacturing but wrote a history of early developments at the Boston Manufacturing Company, Lowell, Manchester, and Lawrence as well. Appleton died at his home in Boston on July 14, 1861, at the age of 81.

<sup>7</sup>Gregory, Nathan Appleton, xi.

<sup>8</sup>Arthur Burr Darling, "Nathan Appleton," Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. I, Part 1 (New York, 1927).

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- The Women's City Club, A Chronicle of the Women's City Club of Boston: 1913-1930 (Boston: The Women's City Club, 1930).

ADDENDUM

15th Annual Antiques Show Gazette, The Women's City Club of Boston, April 1977.

Nathan Appleton Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society,  
Boston, Massachusetts.