

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received **JUL 30 1986**

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Belcher-Ogden Mansion/Benjamin Price/ Price-Brittan Houses District

and or common

2. Location

street & number Corner of East Jersey and Catherine Streets NA not for publication

city, town Elizabeth vicinity of

state New Jersey code 034 county Union code 039

3. Classification

| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
|--|---|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district | <input type="checkbox"/> public | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied | <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum |
| <input type="checkbox"/> building(s) | <input type="checkbox"/> private | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied | <input type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object | <input type="checkbox"/> in process | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> being considered | <input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | NA | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: vacant |

4. Owner of Property

name See continuation sheet

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Union County Court House

street & number Board Street

city, town Elizabeth state New Jersey

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

1. National Register, HABS
title 2. NJ Historic Sites Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

1. 1978; 1934
date 2. 1977; 1984 federal state county local

1. National Park Service
depository for survey records 2. Office of New Jersey Heritage

1. Washington
city, town 2. Trenton state D.C. N.J. 08625

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 | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Belcher-Ogden Mansion, Benjamin Price House and Price-Brittan House, clustered at the intersection of East Jersey and Catherine Streets, are remarkable survivors of 18th/early 19th century Elizabeth. It was then a prosperous and important village, loosely clustered at the head of navigation on the Elizabeth River, and these houses on its outskirts occupied large lots of six to twenty acres and presumably had appurtenant buildings. While their lots are now much reduced in size and no early outbuildings survive, they remain quite well preserved. Two of them, the Belcher-Ogden Mansion and the Benjamin Price House have been acquired and restored by the Elizabethtown Historical Foundation in recent years.

Architectural and historical precedence among the three must be given to the Belcher-Ogden Mansion. An excellent example of mid-18th century domestic Georgian architecture and home to two New Jersey governors, it was listed individually on the National Register of Historic Places in 1978. The house has a brick, 2-story, gable-roofed main block with a symmetrical 5-bay facade, a single-pile center-hall plan and notable detailing of Georgian derivation. The frame, 2-story east wing with appendage was reconstructed in the recent restoration, at which time the brick sidewalks and the picket fence enclosing the small front yard were installed. The 1978 National Register nomination form provides a more detailed description of the house.

In contrast to the Belcher-Ogden Mansion, the Benjamin Price House (1045 East Jersey Street) is a simply detailed, vernacular dwelling of frame construction, consisting of an 18th century, 1 1/2 story main block and two, 2-story rear additions probably dating to the 19th century. It has a raised basement with exposed brick wall over a stone foundation, clapboard siding, wood shingle roof and three chimneys (one within each gable end of the main block and the third within the north gable of the west rear addition) whose brick stacks have corbelled drip caps.

The main block has regular fenestration with a 5-bay, center entry front and 2-bay gable ends. The front first floor windows are 6/6 sash and those of the raised basement are 9 light (some 3/6). Narrow 2/2 sash windows pierce the gable walls on the first and second stories (except for one 6/6 sash east window); above them small 4-light windows indicate the existence of an attic story at the peak of the steeply pitched roof. The first story front windows have architrave trim; the others plain trim. Except for the attic windows, all are fitted with raised panel shutters.

The front's central entry features a six-panel door, plain trim and a transom. The gabled entry stoop has square-spindled railings and plain posts, octagonal in section above square bases. The front eaves of the roof terminate in a simple box cornice; the raking eaves are flush.

The two rear additions abut each other and have gable roofs with parallel ridges. They have 6/6 sash windows with plain trim and panel shutters and simply

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian |
| <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | |

Specific dates 18-19th century **Builder/Architect** NA

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The three houses clustered around the intersection of East Jersey and Catherine Streets form a remarkable surviving remnant of the fabric of 18th and early-19th century Elizabeth. Located only two short blocks from the modern city's mid-town district they retain a relationship to one another that was evidently characteristic of the urban/rural nature of the original Elizabeth town plan. Founded by emigrants from New England, Elizabeth follows the pattern of settlement of that region. Each of the original owners or "associates" had what were essentially three forms of land: a town lot or home site, common land for pasturage or community purposes, and outlying farmland. The town lots were narrow and deep. Houses were built at one of the narrow ends along what were or soon became streets or highways. Land at the rear of the lots supported outbuildings or cultivated fields. From the roads, such a settlement assumed a village character, the sense of which can be still felt at this intersection.

Although the significance of these three houses is enhanced by their relationship, each is individually eligible for the National Register because of their associations and architectural interest. One of the three, the Belcher-Ogden Mansion, is already individually listed, largely because of its association with New Jersey governors, Jonathan Belcher and Aaron Ogden.

The Benjamin Price House, at 1045 East Jersey Street, is perhaps the oldest of the group. It has been said by its present owners, the Elizabethtown Historical Foundation, to have been built by Nathaniel Bonnell or Bunnell as early as 1682. On the basis of the available documentary material and architectural style and materials, both the attributed ownership and the date are unlikely. What can be documented is that for most of the 18th century and the first quarter of the 19th century, the property was owned in succession by members of the Price family.

The first Benjamin Price was established in Elizabeth by 1871. Over the next twenty or more years he purchased several tracts of land in Elizabeth, at least one from Bunnell. Since that tract was bounded on the north by the highway to the point and south by meadows, it must have been located between Elizabeth Avenue and the river, not north of East Jersey Street. Benjamin Price died in 1712. His will divided his property among his several sons, with his house, at a different location, going to Daniel Price. One of his eldest sons, Benjamin Price II, received 40 acres of upland already in his possession. He in turn conveyed 10 acres, including the land on which the Benjamin Prince House stands, to his son, Benjamin III, as a home site in 1731. The house may have been built by this Benjamin or by his son Anthony, who acquired it after his father's death in 1760.

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 3/4 acre

Quadrangle name Elizabeth

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

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| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Zone | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries NA

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Constance M. Greiff/President, Dennis N. Bertland/Architectural Historian
Richard L. Porter/Historian

organization Heritage Studies, Inc. date September 1985

street & number RD 6, Box 864 Mapleton Road telephone 609-452-1754

city or town Princeton state New Jersey 08540

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.

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer signature Helen A. Senneker

title Assistant Commissioner for Natural Resources date 7/17/86

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

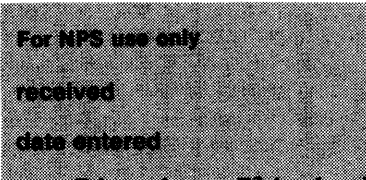
H. Flores Byers Keoper of the National Register Entered in the National Register date 8-28-86

Attest: Chief of Registration date

Chief of Registration

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

**National Register of Historic Places
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Belcher-Ogden Mansion/Benj. Price/Price-Brittan Houses District, Elizabeth,

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Owners

Belcher-Ogden Mansion and Benjamin Price House
Elizabethtown Historical Foundation
1045 East Jersey Street
Elizabeth, New Jersey 07201

Price-Brittan House
American Red Cross
Elizabethtown Chapter
203 West Jersey Street
Elizabeth, New Jersey 07202

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boxed eaves. The rear entry has a simple stoop; the cellar entry on the west side is protected by a gabled hatch. Above the latter is a multi-pane picture window.

The hatch entry and picture window date to the recent renovation of the house at which time the shingle roof was installed and the chimney stacks rebuilt. A pre-restoration photograph indicates that the porch, many of the windows, and the shutters also were installed at the time of the building's rehabilitation by the Elizabethtown Historical Foundation; the siding and most of the window frames, however, are apparently early fabric.

Inside, the main block also is a mix of early and restoration-era fabric; however, the provenance of individual features for the most part is not so readily apparent as outside. The cellar, now converted into a meeting room, originally served as a kitchen and retains a brick timber-linteled fireplace at its west end. Below grade level, the cellar walls are constructed of rubble stone; small brick piers, built on the ledge resulting from the difference in thickness between the stone and brick basement walls, support the large, hewn-timber, clear-spanning first floor joists.

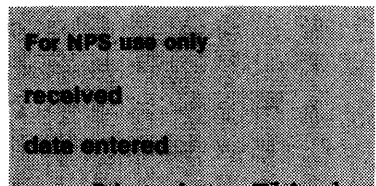
The first floor has a center hall plan with a large front room and a small back chamber on the east side. A similar arrangement originally may have existed to the west where there is now one large room. The two main rooms have fireplaces with treatments typical of the early to mid-18th century. The fireplaces have robust bolection moldings around the openings, and simple raised-panel overmantels. Although these are early work, one and probably both of them are salvaged materials introduced during the restoration.

The open stair in the hallway appears to be original to the house and to date to the late 18th century. It has a square tapered newel post, square spindles, an oval railing, and a plain quirk-beaded string board. Other features of the first floor include random-width floors, exposed planed and chamfer-edged ceiling joists, protruding corner posts in the rear rooms, architrave door and window trim, and six-panel doors.

The upper story with two rooms and a central passage appears to have been extensively refurbished during the restoration and has simple decorative finishes of appropriate design. The roof's hewn and vertically sawn rafters and collar beams are exposed there and in the attic.

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The rear addition also was extensively refurbished in the restoration. It contains a meeting room/library and other facilities on the first floor and an apartment above.

The Benjamin Price House is set at a slight angle to East Jersey Street and back about 50 feet. Its yard which features several large trees and shrubs is enclosed on all four sides by a modern picket fence.

Unlike the other two houses, the Price-Brittan House (1037 East Jersey Street) has not been restored to an early appearance, but retains important decorative fabric from several periods. It is a frame, 1 1/2 story, gambrel-roofed dwelling with small flanking wings, the double-gabled roofs of which indicate two phases of construction. The house may date to the late 18th century, but was extensively remodeled in the 19th century and, to a lesser extent, in the 20th century. As a result, it exhibits Federal, Gothic Revival/Italianate and Colonial Revival features.

The Price-Brittan House has a raised brick basement wall, clapboard siding, and asphalt shingle roof. There are six chimneys, two within each end wall of the main block and one within the front gable of each wing. Their tall brick stacks have corbelled drips; the wing chimneys have exposed backs. The overhanging eaves are boxed and supported by paired scroll brackets, evidently a mid-19th century alteration contemporary with the main block's similarly detailed central cross-gable.

The symmetrical 5-bay facade of the main block has a central entry flanked by floor-length windows with architrave trim. Late Federal in style, the entry has an 8-panel door, wide transom and narrow sidelights with leaded tracery, a cornice-like transom bar, and delicately molded trim. The french windows contain 3-light casements below 2-light transoms. The entry and inner windows open onto a 3-bay Gothic Revival porch, with a pagoda roof with exposed rib-like framing, bargeboard with trefoil pendants, scroll brackets, and lattice-work posts in a chinoiserie pattern. The gable above has a Palladian window. Double-gabled Colonial Revival dormers with paired windows flank the central gable.

The 5-bay rear elevation also has a Federal entry with side-lights and transom, but the windows are 6/6 with architrave trim. The entry opens onto a small stoop with steps on both sides descending to a shed-roofed Colonial Revival piazza. The 3-bay piazza has kicked eaves, box cornice, and square posts.

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The front half of both wings apparently pre-date the rear half. The west wing has two 6/6 sash front windows featuring symmetrically molded trim with carved corner blocks, quadrant gable windows, and a recessed rear porch with Colonial Revival detailing. The east wing has 6/6 sash windows with plain symmetrical molded trim, and front and rear entries with shed-roofed porches.

The first story of the main block has a double-pile, center-hall plan and fairly sophisticated late-Federal decorative finishes. Because the hall is quite narrow, the staircase is located between the two west rooms, opening from the hall through an archway. The staircase has turned newel posts and balusters and a round railing. Double parlors to the east of the hall are separated by a passageway and connected by double-doored openings. The front parlor retains a columned marble mantel and a cast-iron coal grate with brass fittings. Both parlors and the hall feature plaster cornices and ceiling decorations, molded baseboards and chairrails, recessed panel doors, and symmetrically molded door and window trim with carved corner blocks. The surrounds of the connecting parlor doors are further ornamented with elaborately carved rectangular plaques centered on their headers.

The northwest room is more simply detailed with architrave door and window trim and a wooden mantel with plain pilasters. Its fireplace is fitted with a cast-iron Franklin stove ornamented with an eagle and stars.

The upper story of the main block has a large central room surrounded by small chambers. It bears evidence of mid-19th and 20th-century remodeling.

In converting the house into a combination doctor's office and residence in this century, the southwest room on the first floor and the two wings were remodeled extensively and a vestibule inserted at the front of the hall.

The house is set back from the street about 40 feet on a heavily landscaped lot that has become much overgrown. A small garage is located to the rear.

The house has been unoccupied for several years. Although remaining in fairly good condition, it is in need of maintenance and repairs.

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Although subsequent alterations and restorations have obscured some evidence of its original appearance, the Benjamin Price House retains the configuration of what has been classified as a deep East Jersey cottage. As such, it is a rare survivor in an urbanized area of the state.

The Price family remained the owners of the property until 1829, at which time they sold it to Stephen P. Brittan, who had already purchased the adjoining property at 1037 East Jersey Street. By 1850 it belonged to S. Pierce. It passed through several hands in the later 19th century. By the early 20th century it had been converted to a two-family dwelling. In 1906 it was occupied by a family named Bonnell [the only documented association with that family] and by Susan Barker. By the middle of the century it had been further subdivided as a multiple dwelling, before its acquisition by the Elizabethtown Historical Foundation. This organization carried out a restoration that included installation of woodwork salvaged from demolished buildings in the Elizabeth area. The house currently serves as a museum and as headquarters for the Sons of the American Revolution.

The Price-Brittan House, at 1037 East Jersey Avenue, was originally a Price property. It shared a common ownership with 1045 until the death of Benjamin III in 1760. At that time this portion of his estate became the property of his son George Price. George sold the property to Thomas Salter in 1808 for \$4,000, a sum that suggests there was already a house on the 20-acre lot. Salter in turn sold the property to S.F. Brittan in 1820. Although Brittan also purchased the Anthony Price property at 1045 in 1829, by 1837 the two were physically separated when Catherine Street was laid out between them.

Brittan may have incorporated an earlier house built by George Price into his own dwelling. More detailed probing of the structure, now entirely enclosed, would be required to establish this. The excellent late Federal detailing, including the front entry, staircase, and parlor woodwork appear to date from his ownership. He also made substantial alterations to the house, transforming it into the best example of a mid-19th century romantic cottage once surviving in Elizabeth. This major work was accompanied between 1851 and 1854, as noted in a codicil to his will.

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Bibliography

Belcher-Ogden Mansion National Register nomination 1978.
New Jersey Historic Sites Inventory 1008.6.
East Jersey Deeds, Book 1/249, A/169, D/208, 209, 410, 430, E/119, 5/70.
Essex County Deeds, Book B3/223, D3/121, I2/311, 316, K9, 35.
New Jersey Wills, 104986, 144776.

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Boundary Description

As depicted on the accompanying map, the boundary for the most part follows the lines of the lots on which the three houses are located. On the west side it jogs in a straight line of convenience across East Jersey Street, connecting the northwest corner of lot 9/431 and the southwest corner of 9/382; similarly it crosses Catherine Street on its north side to connect the northeast and northwest corners of lots 9/382 and 9/381. On its south and east sides, the district boundary follows a line of convenience along the middle of Catherine and East Jersey Streets.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries were chosen to include those buildings that still retain a sense of feeling and association with the past. Consideration was given to extending the boundaries westward on East Jersey Street to include an Italianate villa, a row of brownstones that were once of considerable elegance, and Boxwood Hall, which is already a National Historic Landmark. Although these buildings once made up one of Elizabeth's most fashionable residential districts, those between the district and Boxwood Hall have lost too much architectural integrity to qualify as a district for the purposes of the National Register.

Consideration was also given to extending the boundaries north and south along Catherine Street, where houses constructed in the first half of the 19th century survive. With the exception of two of these however, these buildings also have been too severely altered to qualify. Furthermore, south of East Jersey Street this would require inclusion of at least one of two buildings that, in this context, should be classified as intrusions in terms of scale and style. The first of these is a large police station directly south of the Belcher-Ogden Mansion along the west side of Catherine Street. The second, a YM-YWHA, occupies the southeast corner of East Jersey and Catherine Streets. Although some of these buildings may be eligible for the National Register individually, they do not contribute to the period of significance for which the district is being nominated.

1. Belcher-Ogden Mansion
2. Benjamin Price House
3. Price-Brittan House

District
Elizabeth, Union County, NJ

