

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: New York
COUNTY: New York
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Stuyvesant-Fish House

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Hamilton Fish House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
21 Stuyvesant Street

CITY OR TOWN:
New York

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
18

STATE:
New York

CODE:
36

COUNTY:
New York

CODE:
061

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Mr. F. Phillip Geraci

STREET AND NUMBER:
21 Stuyvesant Street

CITY OR TOWN:
New York

STATE:
New York

CODE:
36

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
New York City Register

STREET AND NUMBER:
31 Chambers Street

CITY OR TOWN:
New York

STATE:
New York

CODE:
36

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission; National Register

DATE OF SURVEY:
1965; 1971

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission; National Register

STREET AND NUMBER:
305 Broadway; 1100 L Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN:
New York; Washington

STATE:
New York; D.C.

CODE:
36; 11

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336.

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

Hamilton Fish was born in a 3 1/2-story, Federal-style house, where he lived until around 1838. The residence stands on land granted to Fish's ancestor Peter Stuyvesant, the Governor of New Amsterdam, during the 17th century. In 1803-4 Fish's grandfather Petrus Stuyvesant built the dwelling for his daughter and her husband, Nicholas Fish. A rowhouse, it was at that time attached on its west but not on its east side. The architect is unknown.

Although Fish moved away in about 1838, his mother lived here until her death in 1854, and the dwelling stayed in the Fish family until about the turn of the century. Thereafter, it became a roominghouse. Beginning in 1964, it was again owner occupied, and in 1967 the present occupant undertook its restoration.

Externally, the residence seems almost completely returned to its 1804 appearance except for east and rear porches that cannot be rebuilt for lack of space. A small, circa 1825, one-bay-square extension remains in the east rear bay of the three-bay-wide rectangular structure. The house sits atop a high stone foundation with a stone water table. Red brick laid in Flemish bond makes the front facade, and six-over-six sash front windows retain original splayed stone lintels and stone sills. Black-painted shutters decorate the first-story windows, too. In the rear, the bricks are laid in common bond, and the six-over-six windows have stone sills and plain brick capitals. A slate pitched roof with a plain wooden cornice surmounts the house, and two red brick chimneys pierce it on the west side. Overlooking the street, two arched dormers have a doubled keystone at the center of the arch, and their arched windows are also six-over-six sash. At one time, matching dormers graced the house rear, but they have been removed.

The front door is located in the east bay and stands about 4 feet above street level. Interesting, and most likely original, ironwork surrounds the doorway and stoop. Modified about 1838, the doorway has been restored to its first appearance. Black-painted, it has eight panels, rectangular side lights, and a semielliptical fanlight. Fluted moldings and a brass door handle decorate. Inside, the dwelling follows a two-room-deep, side-hall plan on three floors and in the cellar. Numerous original features have survived. Thus, an original semielliptical transverse arch adorns the first-floor front hall. With ornamental brackets, the 1804 open-string, two-run stairway mounts to the upper levels. Its almost circular handrail spirals at the newel

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

(continued)

SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1808-circa 1838**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political	<input 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 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 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

Hamilton Fish's biographer calls him not only "one of our ablest Secretaries of State" but "the strongest member of the Grant Administration."¹ For 8 years, longer than any other Cabinet officer, Secretary Fish served President Ulysses S. Grant well and faithfully. He performed his duties admirably, exerted an important moderating influence on the President, and imparted badly needed moral authority to the scandal-racked Government.

Trained as a lawyer, Fish engaged in a pre-Civil War political career that included terms as Governor of New York and U.S. Senator, but he had enjoyed a decade-long retirement when Grant asked him to become Secretary of State. At that time, war threatened with either Great Britain or Spain. Secretary Fish maintained peace and negotiated the landmark Treaty of Washington with England, substituting arbitration for hostilities. Equally important, Fish's cautious day-by-day advice saved Grant from some embarrassing blunders.

Fish's birthplace and his home for about 30 years was a 3 1/2-story, Federal-style rowhouse with arched dormers. Little altered through the years, it retains numerous original exterior and interior features. In addition, the owner undertook an extensive restoration during the 1960's, and with fine reproductions, drawn from extant originals, the house is now in excellent condition. Associated also with Hamilton's father, Nicholas Fish, who served as a Revolutionary War officer and was a leading Federalist, the house is the only known extant residence of Hamilton Fish. It has been designated a city landmark of New York.

Biography

When Hamilton Fish was born in 1808, he inherited a long

(continued)

¹ Allan Nevins, Hamilton Fish; The Inner History of the Grant Administration (New York, 1937), vii.

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9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

DeConde, Alexander, A History of American Foreign Policy (New York, 1963).

Nevins, Allan, Hamilton Fish; The Inner History of the Grant Administration (New York, 1937).

National Register "Inventory-Nomination Form" for Stuyvesant-Fish House. Prepared by Stephen Lash of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission. Submitted December 2, 1971.

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
NW	° ' "	° ' "		40	43	49
NE	° ' "	° ' "		73	59	20
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **less than 1 acre**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Cathy A. Alexander, Assistant Editor

ORGANIZATION: **American Association for State and Local History** DATE: **Sept. 1, 1974**

STREET AND NUMBER:
1315 Eighth Avenue South

CITY OR TOWN: **Nashville** STATE: **Tennessee** CODE: **47**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

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

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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7. Description (cont'd.)

post, and slender turned spindles complete the banister. At the rear of the hall a separate stair descends to the cellar, which once held a kitchen and dining room. The first-story rooms were probably a double reception room. In its west wall, each salon has an elegant fireplace reproduced from an original, which is also on display. Moldings and outlines in the house's east wall reveal the placement of a door at each level onto the three-story veranda, which was removed over a century ago.

The second floor retains some original baseboards, narrow pine board flooring, and stencilwork, and throughout the residence, wherever the original features were lost, they are skillfully reproduced. Even interior doorknobs have been copied from an original. Eventually, paint samples will help in reproducing authentic tints on the floors and ceilings. The second-floor rooms included a sitting room and a formal dining room, and in the short hall between them is an original, wooden ceiling decoration that resembles a sunburst. The two rooms have fireplaces in the west wall. A little room at the front end of the side hall served apparently as a sewing room, and the present owner has concealed a small modern kitchen in it.

On the third story, the basic floor plan remains visible despite some alterations making it a living area with modern plumbing. New closets match the original woodwork, and the west-wall fireplaces are less elaborate. The attic dormer level retains original wide plank flooring. In its east wall, above the former portico, an original window design is visible. Partially reconstructed, it consists of two eight-over-eight windows flanked by quarter-circle windows. Today, the attic contains the owner's workroom and office.

No original furniture remains, but many period pieces fill the residence. The building stands on a street of comparable rowhouses and is a designated New York City landmark.

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8. Significance (cont'd.)

and distinguished family tradition. Through his mother, Elizabeth Stuyvesant Fish, he could trace his ancestry to Peter Stuyvesant, Governor of New Amsterdam in 1647-64. His father, Nicholas, descended from an Englishman who came to America in 1634. Nicholas (1758-1833) had been an officer in the War for Independence, and he became a leading Federalist. He was a close friend of Alexander Hamilton and nurtured his son, named for Hamilton, on stories about the Revolution and Federalist politics.

Hamilton Fish began his formal education at Valentine Derry's school and continued it at M. Bancel's. In 1827 he was graduated with highest honors from Columbia College and began reading law in the office of Peter A. Jay, John Jay's oldest son. In 1830, Fish opened his own practice, and 6 years later he and Julia Kean married.

Because it carried on Federalist traditions, Fish belonged to the Whig Party. A conservative, he entered New York politics to counter such extremist Democrats as the Loco-Focoes. In 1842 he gained a seat in the U.S. House of Representatives, but failed reelection, then won a special race for Lieutenant Governor of New York in 1847. The next year Fish was elected Governor. After an uneventful term, he decided not to run again, but early in 1851 the legislature made him U.S. Senator. In the Senate Fish, who was mildly opposed to slavery, usually accepted the lead of his senior colleague, William H. Seward. After 1854, though, Fish refused to follow Seward from the fatally divided Whig organization into the more radical Republican Party, which Fish joined at last in 1856. Meanwhile, in 1855 he had found a seat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee.

In 1857, without regrets, Fish retired from politics, and for the next 2 years he toured Europe with his wife and eight children. During the Civil War, he supported the Union, but not uncritically, and he seemed the lonely survivor of a more moderate, reasonable, and genteel time. After the war, he retained some business interests and served his Episcopal Church and other educational, historical, patriotic, or charitable causes.

Early in 1869, Fish attended Ulysses S. Grant's Presidential inauguration. A week later, Grant offered Fish,

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8. Significance (cont'd.)

then 60, the post of Secretary of State. He declined immediately, but Grant had already submitted the nomination to the Senate. Thus, urged also by the President's military secretary, Orville E. Babcock, and by Mrs. Fish, he accepted the position.

An accomplished executive, Fish started by organizing the Department and choosing ministers, consuls, and secretaries of legation from the officeseekers who besieged him. Among the first and most pressing of the substantive problems that he faced was negotiation of compensation for Civil War losses due to lax enforcement of British neutrality laws. The central issue was the so-called "Alabama claims," northern demands for reparations for damage inflicted by Confederate cruisers fitted out in British ports. During the previous administration, a joint convention to settle these grievances was written, but 1 month after Fish assumed office, the Senate called the agreement insufficient and rejected it. Fortunately, a few months later, Fish was able to reopen the talks through indirect channels. Still, 18 months passed before tempers cooled, Fish's realism prevailed, and the British and American Governments agreed to form a Joint High Commission and reconsider.

Meeting 37 times between February and May 1871, the Joint High Commission, consisting of five Americans, led by Fish, four Britons, and one Canadian, completed the Treaty of Washington. The document covered several major areas to be resolved by arbitration. The foremost section concerned the "Alabama claims." In it the British expressed regret for the depredations and agreed to some retroactive rules defining neutral obligations. In addition, the treaty provided for a five-member International Tribunal of Arbitration to work out a monetary settlement. Other provisions in the Treaty of Washington dealt with arbitration of American and Canadian fishing rights, a territorial dispute, and American and British grievances distinct from the "Alabama claims." The American press and public accepted the document, and the Senate ratified it quickly by a vote of 50 to 12.

That December, the "Alabama claims" Arbitrators assembled in Geneva, Switzerland, to receive the British and American cases. To forestall congressional criticism, Fish and his assistant included in their deposition an

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8. Significance (cont'd.)

exaggerated demand for indirect damages. While the Secretary supposed that the Tribunal would eventually reject the claim, the English reacted with more indignation than anticipated, and the negotiations stalled. Following 6 tense months of warlike threats, the Arbitrators formulated an extrajudicial opinion that declared the demand invalid. By mid-September 1872 the Tribunal had finished its work. In accord with the neutrality rules embodied in the Treaty of Washington, the Board held Great Britain responsible for direct damages and awarded the United States an indemnity of \$15,500,000. Other negotiations provided for under the treaty proceeded more smoothly. Alexander DeConde, an historian of our foreign policy, has praised the Treaty of Washington and its arbitrations as a signal "victory for diplomatic negotiation."²

The Treaty of Washington did not represent President Grant's approach to foreign affairs, however, and it was concluded only after Fish achieved ascendancy in that area. How the Secretary did so relates largely to Grant's efforts to annex the war-exhausted Dominican Republic. Land speculators began urging the President toward this end shortly after he took office, and soon he had his heart set on American possession of the island nation. In the summer of 1869 he sent Babcock to the Dominican Republic, where the military secretary signed a protocol for annexation. Regarding the project as less important than the British and other questions, Fish allowed Babcock to negotiate a treaty and convention before the year's end. Early in 1870 these instruments went to the Senate for ratification, but even Grant's undignified lobbying could not overcome strong public sentiment against annexation. Thus, his defeat showed Grant his need for Fish's good judgment and active support. Subsequently the Secretary enjoyed greater liberty in foreign affairs, particularly in dealing with the explosive Cuban situation.

Beginning in 1868, a rebellion against Spanish rule racked Cuba with savage guerilla fighting. Meanwhile, in the

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² Alexander DeConde, A History of American Foreign Policy (New York, 1963), 284.

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8. Significance (cont'd.)

United States, Cuban exiles and refugees started lobbying for assistance, and they won much popular sympathy. Since the rebels had no government, Fish would not recognize their belligerency. Instead, in the summer of 1869, he offered Spain a mediation plan that exchanged Cuban independence for a U.S.-guaranteed indemnity. While Spain demurred, Grant pressed Fish to recognize the insurgents. Fortunately, busy with his Dominican plan, the President dropped the matter. The next summer, though, congressional interventionists prepared a joint resolution for recognition. Fish now insisted that Grant thwart them. Thus, the Secretary wrote a ghostwrote a special message, which Grant sent immediately to the Congress, and a few days later, intervention met defeat.

Early in 1871 Spain agreed to an arbitral board for American damage claims in Cuba, and so the problem stood until 1873. That November a Spanish gunboat seized the steamer Virginus. This vessel possessed an American registry but carried out filibustering expeditions to Cuba. The gunboat took the Virginus into a Cuban port, where the captain and 53 of the crew and passengers were summarily executed. While war loomed, Fish received evidence that the Virginus was owned by Cuban lobbyists and that its American papers had been fraudulently obtained. Thereafter, an agreement was achieved whereby Spain released the ship and survivors, admitted the illegality of the seizure, and paid an indemnity to the relatives of executed Americans. Apparently, public opinion accepted this outcome of the Virginus affair.

Late in 1875 Fish made a last effort to stop the bloodshed in Cuba and head off interventionist feeling in Congress. Thus, while urging Grant to include an argument opposing recognition in his annual Presidential message, Fish dispatched his stern Instruction No. 266, threatening intervention, to our Ambassador in Spain. The President's message achieved its object, but No. 266 led to few Spanish concessions. Still, Fish had kept the difficult peace.

Some additional problems that confronted Fish during his term of office included maintenance of American neutrality during the Franco-Prussian War, 1870-71; completion of a commercial reciprocity treaty with Hawaii, 1875; and unsuccessful negotiations for an isthmian canal treaty. Also, he played a growing role in the General Government. His

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8. Significance (cont'd.)

strategic letter of resignation in 1874 helped check pernicious meddling in the Cabinet by the Babcock cabal. Time and again, by restraining Grant from dangerous errors of policy or in appointments, Fish provided caution and statesmanship to an administration that needed them.

When he left the State Department in 1877, Fish returned to a pleasant retirement. Work in church affairs, service as a Columbia College trustee, and interest in the New York Historical Society occupied his busy days. Fish's 85th birthday in 1893 occasioned many public and private tributes, and his health seemed little weakened. Slightly more than a month later, he died in his chair.