

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE: Massachusetts
COUNTY: Suffolk
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

**1. NAME**

COMMON: Charles Sumner House

AND/OR HISTORIC: Charles Sumner House

NHL

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: 20 Hancock Street

CITY OR TOWN: Boston

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

STATE: Massachusetts

CODE: Suffolk

COUNTY: Suffolk

CODE:

**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	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>Apartment House.</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
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**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME: Mrs. Helen C. Smith

STREET AND NUMBER: 20 Hancock Street

CITY OR TOWN: Boston

STATE: Massachusetts

CODE:

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Suffolk County Courthouse or City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Boston

STATE: Massachusetts

CODE:

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
COUNTY:  
ENTRY NUMBER  
DATE

101

7: DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" 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

The Sumner House is a Federal style four-story townhouse in which Charles Sumner lived for over thirty years of his life. While not in the best of repair, owing to the limited finances of the present owner, the floor plan, mantelpieces and woodwork of the Sumner house are intact.

The central and original block has a standard side hall plan. The hall enters into a front parlor and rear sitting room, beyond, which is a kitchen. The upper floors have a similar arrangement of rooms.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**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)

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry     |  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture         | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention    | <input type="checkbox"/> Science                         | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture        | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape    | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture                       | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social: Humanitarian | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce            | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature   | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                         | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications      | <input type="checkbox"/> Military     | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation                  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation        | <input type="checkbox"/> Music        |  | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The Charles Sumner House was the residence of one of the most pivotal figures in American politics both before and after the Civil War. Justifiably criticized for his intemperate speech and intolerant views-- a northern equivalent of the "fire-eating" secessionists of the south-- he was the most outspoken political opponent of slavery. Entering the Senate in 1851, he is credited with signaling the disaffection with the Compromise of 1850 and placing the anti-slavery crusade on a political footing. The brutal assault made upon him in Congress, resulting from his insulting philippics, was one more pivotal event, like John Brown's raids, which emotionally polarized the nation and intensified the inevitability of civil conflict.

Sumner had a large part in the formation of the Republican Party and his published and distributed oration "The Barbarism of Slavery" was a prominent propaganda piece in the campaign of 1860. When the Civil War began he was the first prominent statesman to urge emancipation as a measure to end the war. When the Proclamation was finally issued, no man had done more than him to prepare public sentiment for its approval.\* With Republican control of the Senate in 1861, Sumner was made chairman of the powerful foreign relations committee rendering a decade of distinguished service in that post. Forging a close alliance with the administration he successfully suppressed moves in Congress which risked war with Great Britain and France.

Sumner was the earliest progenitor of the extreme doctrine that secession disposed of all rights of the separatist States. A radical Republican, he championed Congressional reconstruction of the South in opposition to the moderate Presidential prescription and probably was the greatest influence in the defeat of Lincoln's proposal. In the Johnson administration he joined with Thaddeus Stevens in the leadership of radical reconstruction intent on securing civil rights for freedmen. He was

\*George H. Haynes, "Charles Sumner," Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. XVIII (New York, 1943), pp. 208-214.

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Massachusetts	
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8. Significance: (1) Charles Sumner House

prominent in the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson, his indiscriminate invective earning him justified historical criticism.

Biography

Charles Sumner, United States Senator and ardent abolitionist, was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1811. His father, Charles Pinckney Sumner, was outspoken in condemning slavery and so earnest an advocate of "equal rights" that he opposed the exclusion of black children from the schools and the law prohibiting interracial marriage.

Unable to secure an appointment to West Point, Sumner entered Harvard College and later Harvard Law School where he became the devoted pupil and friend of Joseph Story. Before beginning his practice, Sumner spent several weeks in Washington attending the Supreme Court, where his friend, Story, was a Justice. Sumner listened to Webster and Clay but, left Washington with a distaste for politics. The routine of law practice bored him so, he went to Europe for nearly three years, where he met many great leaders and learned French, German and Italian.

In 1851, Sumner was elected to the Senate and the aggressive abolitionist vigorously attacked the Fugitive-slave Law. In 1856, during his notable anti-slavery speech, "In Crime against Kansas," he denounced the Kansas-Nebraska Act as "a swindle." A master of the invective, Sumner singled out Senator Butler of South Carolina as one of his special victims. Two days later Butler's nephew, Representative Preston Brooks, attacked Sumner with a cane and severely injured him. It took nearly 3-1/2 years for his recovery but, the Massachusetts legislature re-elected him by an almost unanimous vote.

When Sumner returned to the Senate, he found that southern leaders were more aggressive than ever over slavery in the territories. During the debate for the admission of Kansas as a free state, he attempted to assault slavery on all fronts-social, moral and economic as well as the political aspects. He ignored his Massachusetts constituents and refused to support the Crittenden Compromise. Sumner continually urged emancipation to end the war and highly approved of Lincoln's Proclamation, though he had been impatient at its long delay.

He played an important part in organizing the Republican Party and when they controlled the Senate in 1861, he was made chairman of the "committee on foreign affairs--an assignment worthy of his abilities. In the "Trent Affair he favored releasing the Confederate commissioners, Mason and Slidell. He kept the United States at peace with Britain and France, when war with either of them would have disrupted the Union.

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8. Significance: (2) Charles Sumner House, Boston, Massachusetts

Sumner believed the seceded states had "committed suicide" and therefore lost all rights under the Constitution. Along with Thaddeus Stevens, he held that reconstruction was the function of Congress--not the President. He actively sought President Johnson's impeachment. He hampered negotiations concerning Civil War claims against Britain and strongly denounced President Grant's scheme to annex Santo Domingo, which probably led to his removal from the chairmanship of the foreign affairs committee.

Despite Sumner's devotion to the one cause of "absolute human equality," he was diligent in the routine work of a senator and was respected in his discussions of money and finance, the tariff, postal regulations and copyright. He died of a heart attack March 11, 1874.

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Donald, David, Charles Sumner and The Coming of the Civil War, New York; Alfred A. Knopf, 1960.

Haynes, George H., "Charles Sumner," in Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. XVIII, pp. 208-214.

Pierce, Edward L., Memoir and Letters of Charles Sumner, 4 Vols., Boston; Robert Brothers, 1881.

**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	0			0			42°	21'	37"
NE	0			0			71°	03'	56"
SE	0			0					
SW	0			0					

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: Benjamin Levy, Senior Historian

ORGANIZATION: Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service DATE

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L Street, NW

CITY OR TOWN: Washington, STATE: D.C. CODE

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

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 \_\_\_\_\_

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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 \_\_\_\_\_

SEE INSTRUCTIONS