

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED DEC 3 1980
DATE ENTERED MAR 19 1982

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

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC DEACON JOHN HOLBROOK HOUSE

AND/OR COMMON

The Boyden House - The Chapin House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Corner Linden & Chapin Streets (NE Corner)

N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Brattleboro

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

N/A VICINITY OF

Vermont

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Vermont

50

Windham

025

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	N/A IN PROCESS	<input 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
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME James A. Britton & James A. Britton, Jr.

STREET & NUMBER

315 Federal Street

CITY, TOWN

Greenfield

N/A VICINITY OF

STATE

Massachusetts

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, Office of Town Clerk
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Brattleboro

STATE

Vermont

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Vermont Historic Sites and Structures Survey

DATE

1971

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

CITY, TOWN

Montpelier

STATE

Vermont

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

After retirement from active business in 1825, Deacon John Holbrook built his late Federal style house on twenty acres of land, across from the Common, now the corner of Linden and Chapin Streets. The "L" shaped house is of wood frame construction with a clapboard exterior, and has a slate clad gabled roof. It was then, and is now, an impressive structure, designed and built by local carpenter, Nathaniel Bliss. The crisp detail and fine workmanship are just as attractive today as when the building was built.

The proportions of the entrance porch is an eye-catching feature - always requiring a second look at its front facade. The three open pediments of the front porch are set on single and paired Ionic columns with bases. (The entrance, in the right bay of the gable facade, has a carved shell motif in the spandrel of the semi-circular shaped fanlight.) The windows of the house are symmetrically organized. The house has a pedimented gable of flush boards with a large carved, oval sunburst ornament to complete its detail.

The windows are double-hung with nine over nine sash of square (11"x11") panes; the interior jambs are splayed and flanked by paneled 'Indian' shutters.

The main house is two and a half stories in height, with an entrance hall, reception room, drawing or living room, sitting room, dining room, lavatory, kitchen, three porches, and garage. The ceiling height is 9'8" on the first floor. The second floor has four bedrooms, two baths, sleeping porch, maid's quarters and bath, and a coachman's room over the kitchen. It has a ceiling height of 8'8". A sizable attic is located over the main house, reached by a very unusual "witches" stair.

Interior doors are hardwood; 1-3/4" thick, and have 6 panels which are raised on one side; flat on the other. Each door has solid brass hardware, a variety of glass and solid brass knobs; some have brass thumb latches and all have brass hinges. The surrounds are of moulded wood with hand-carved corner blocks.

All interior trim detail is of the late Federal Period with many well-crafted carved details around windows and doors. A walnut mirror, which features a carved shell head, is set in a recessed space which is topped by a broken pediment and flanked by reeded columns. This is placed on the east wall of the reception room. Room cornices throughout the house are of wood, and of the type illustrated in the books of Asher Benjamin. Decorative arches surround the reception room window seat, and a series of three arches embrace the window bays and drawing room center fireplace. All floors, except that in the kitchen, are of hard, clear maple.

Two chandeliers, in the reception room and living room, are of fine cut crystal. These are said to have come from the White House in Washington, D.C., and, along with other treasures, were reported to have been removed when James and Dolley Madison fled in the face of a British raiding party.

A very unusual set of stairs gives access to the attic at a pitch almost as steep as a ladder; this was apparently done to save space. The surviving members of the Boyden family, who until recently lived in the house, claim that the stairs were always known as "Witches Stairs" for when witches gained access to the attic, it was impossible for them to come down such steep steps into the main part of the house.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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The Deacon John Holbrook house in Brattleboro remains as one of the villages finer late Federal period houses and has undergone little alteration through the years. The interior craftsmanship make it one of the more unusual and outstanding houses in Vermont.

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 checked="" 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 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 type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1825

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Nathaniel Bliss

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Deacon John Holbrook house is worthy of continued preservation as a good example from Vermont of the late Federal Period. It offers a representative sampling of the varied aspects of small town New England culture through the period in which the town was developed. The building is also significant for its local and regional historical associations.

John Holbrook was born at Weymouth, Mass. in 1761. His early education was obtained in engineering and he started his early career as a land surveyor in the vicinity of Newfane, Vermont. He soon expanded his practice to the entire county of Windham. While he was in Newfane, he became the co-owner of a general store where he purchased produce and articles for barter; these were taken by pack horses to Brattleboro, Vermont and Greenfield, Massachusetts where they were exchanged for dry goods and groceries. In 1795 he moved to Brattleboro.

After locating in Brattleboro, John Holbrook established an additional outlet for farm produce with a leading Hartford, Connecticut merchant. He built a slaughter house on an island in the Connecticut River where large quantities of beef, pork, and hams were cured for the trade market. He also established trading business and owned the first flat-bottomed boat on the Connecticut River as a means of exchanging heavy freight with the seaboard. He owned "The Highlander", a flat boat which would carry 24 tons and was the largest of its type on the river. Meanwhile, he became quite successful in importing goods from the West Indies to Brattleboro, Vermont by water.

In 1816 John Holbrook (a Deacon of the First Church of Brattleboro's East Village) took over his son-in-law's business of paper making, printing, bookbinding, and book dealing, as well as publishing of one of Brattleboro's first newspapers.

Besides Deacon Holbrook's extensive commercial ventures by flatboat, his trade with the West Indies and his publishing interests, he was one of the original directors of the Phoenix Bank of Hartford, Connecticut; president of the Brattleboro Bank; one of the original trustees of the Vermont Asylum for the Insane; and also one of the first trustees of the Brattleboro High School Assoc.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Barrows, Mussey - "Vermont History".

Bibby, Joan - Paper "Federal House built by John Holbrook and designed by Nathaniel Bliss."

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

(see continuation sheet)

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than 1 A.

Quadrangle Name: Brattleboro, VT-NH
Scale: 1:62500

UTM REFERENCES

A | 1,8 | 6,9,9 | 0,5,0 | 4,7 | 4,7 | 4,0,0 |
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C | | | | | | | | | | | | |

B | | | | | | | | | | | | |
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D | | | | | | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

As described in The Brattleboro Town Land records, Book 163, page 310.
The lot of approximately 16,000 sq. ft. is bounded:
SE by Chapin Street approx. 144'-8"
NE by Linden Street approx. 109'-6"
NW by right-of-way held jointly by F. Elliott Barber, Jr. and Linden Gardens, Inc.
SW by Linden Gardens Inc. and others

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

James A. Britton, A.I.A., Architect

1980

ORGANIZATION

James A. Britton, Inc., Architects

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

315 Federal Street

TELEPHONE

1-413-774-4200

CITY OR TOWN

Greenfield

STATE

Massachusetts

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

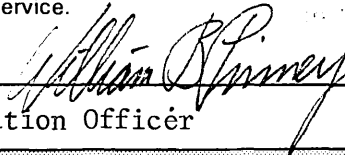
NATIONAL

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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE



TITLE Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE November 19, 1980

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 3-19-82

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 3-17-82

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Continuation sheet Significance

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When Deacon Holbrook retired from active business in 1825, "he built the house facing the Common, which is the best specimen of colonial architecture the town has had, with twenty acres adjoining,---"(1) "---laid out by him in 1825 was a large orchard, bearing a variety of fruits, a vegetable garden and a bordered garden of flowers. The fragrance of those old-fashioned flowers seems to be wafted down the years to us, with their quaint and suggestive names: eglantine, sweet violet, honeysuckle, London pride, love-lies-bleeding, heart's ease, gillyflower, polyanthus, sweet-william, wallflower, honesty, spicy pinks, foxgloves, flower-de-luce, hollyhocks."(2)

The architect and builder of the Holbrook House was Nathaniel Bliss (1782-1866), born in Royalston, Mass. His style of architecture closely followed that of Asher Benjamin; especially certain designs found in the book, The Country Builder's Assistant, published in nearby Greenfield, Mass., in 1805. Bliss was described as possessed of unusual skill and faithfulness in all his undertakings, and was a man of integrity, with remarkable habits of industry.(3)

Deacon Holbrook's youngest son, Frederick Holbrook, born in 1813, attended the Berkshire Gymnasium at Pittsfield, Mass.--then one of the better schools for young men in the country. Here the young Holbrook studied under both Professor Chester Dewey of Williams College and Mark Hopkins who afterwards became the president of Williams College.

In the early years Frederick Holbrook, who would later assume a position of national recognition, became very interested in agriculture. He studied farming methods in Great Britain for two years, and wrote articles for leading agricultural publications, including The Brattleboro Eagle in 1853, and The Country Gentleman. He was also an inventor of an all-steel plow. In 1849-1850 he was elected a member of the Vermont State Senate and at the Republican Convention in 1861 was nominated and later elected as the first Republican Governor of the State of Vermont. He served well during the war years, both to the State and to the Nation, and became one of President Lincoln's advisors and friends.

At the time of Deacon John Holbrook's death, the Vermont Phoenix wrote in his obituary that:

"He was one of the oldest inhabitants of this village, and had probably done more to promote its prosperity than any other individual. For many years he was occupied in extensive business with his fellowmen, and by his unyielding integrity he won the respect of all who knew him. The afflicted and distressed always received his attention and kindness; and he was ever ready to aid all worthy public enterprises and institutions. By this afflictive dispensation of Divine Providence, his family are bereaved of a king and affectionate husband and father; the church with which he was connected of one of its firmest pillars and brightest ornaments; the community of an useful member; and the world of a generous philanthropist."(4)

1. Annals of Brattleboro, p.234.
2. Annals of Brattleboro, p.322.
3. Annals of Brattleboro, p.567.
4. Annals of Brattleboro, p.235.

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Three years after Deacon Holbrook's death in 1838, his widow sold the house to Dr. Charles Chapin who, in spite of being trained as a physician, was interested in business ventures. He acted as developer of Holbrook's twenty acres of gardens and divided the tract into lots, sold them, and created Chapin Street in the process.

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Brattleboro, Town of - Records of Town Clerk.
 Brattleboro, Town of - Records of Town Listers.
 Cabot, Mary R. - Annals of Brattleboro 1681-1895, in 2 volumes,
 press of E. L. Hildreth & Co., published 1921-22.

INTERVIEW

Boyden, Alice - Former owner of property. Interview with and use of materials gathered by Miss Boyden.