

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: New Hampshire	
COUNTY: Rockingham	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Governor John Langdon Mansion

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
143 Pleasant Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Portsmouth

STATE New Hampshire	CODE 03801	COUNTY: Rockingham	CODE
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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 type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	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"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	_____	_____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities

STREET AND NUMBER:
141 Cambridge Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Boston

STATE:
Massachusetts

CODE:
02134

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
Registry of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Exeter

STATE:
New Hampshire

CODE:
03833

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:

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities, which owns the Governor John Langdon Mansion along with some 50 other properties, regards it as "one of the Society's finest and most historic houses." A write-up in New Hampshire Profiles is even more ebullient, calling it "one of the great Georgian houses in America." Every detail of design," this article continues, "from ... entrance hall to governor's chamber, reflects the grandeur of the period." Built in 1784, the Langdon Mansion is basically a two-and-one-half story, five-bay structure, with wings extending to the rear which give it quite a complex floor plan. Among the more elaborate details are the corner posts in the form of Corinthian pilasters with intricately carved capitals, the nine-paneled door with its three lights flanked by four engaged columns and surmounted by a rectangular transom, and the portico supporting a railing with massive turned balusters and a surface scroll curving up on either side of the second-floor window. There are carved modillions under the cornices, the lintels, and the scrolled pediments of the dormers, and the hip roof is topped by a captain's walk of classic design.

The interior features are equally elegant. The carved paneling, particularly the parlor fireframe, is noteworthy, and the drawing room includes such embellishments as arched panels over the windows with a fleur de lis carved above each keystone. Mention should also be made of the extensive gardens surrounding the house, elaborately landscaped in a manner reminiscent of country homes of the French nobility during the ancien regime.

Though not in perfect repair, the mansion's state of preservation both inside and out is exceptional, especially considering the delicacy of many of the details. Sometimes called the Governor John Langdon Memorial, the house stands as confirmation that attempts to emulate patterns of 18th-century Continental elegance were not limited solely to more southerly portions of the United States.

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6. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

John Langdon was a leading figure in New Hampshire mercantile, military, and political affairs for more than 40 years. For part of that time he also played a role on the national stage. During the Revolution, he commanded troops in several key engagements, while simultaneously serving as a major supplier of war materiel for the Continentals. His diverse commercial enterprises flourished both during and after the war, and an astute French observer characterized him as "the Rob. Morris of his State."

Langdon served two stints as a delegate to the Continental Congress, three times as Speaker of the New Hampshire Legislature, and several one-year terms as President of the State. On the national scene, he was delegated to the Philadelphia Convention of 1787, he was present at the initial convocation of the United States Senate, and he served therein for 12 years, more than half that time as president pro tem. As such, he administered the oath of office to each of the first two Presidents of the United States. Never more than a nominal Federalist, Langdon swung over to the opposition during the 1790s and was subsequently offered the post of Secretary of the Navy by President Jefferson. He declined, however, in order to return to the political wars in his home State.

Langdon's Portsmouth mansion, which he built in 1784, evidences his affection for French manners. Described as "one of the great Georgian houses in America," it stands as an excellently preserved memorial to Langdon. Certain interior rooms, the decor of which is especially elegant, are open to the public several times a week.

Biography

"John Langdon was the archetype of the personal property interest." These are the words, not of Charles Beard, but of Forrest McDonald, his foremost adversary in the historiographical controversy over the economic origins of the Constitution. Langdon was indeed a man of considerable wealth; in 1788 the French Minister, Otto, could

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Beard, Charles, An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States (New York, 1913).

Elwyn, J. L., "Some Account of John Langdon," Early State Papers of New Hampshire, Vol. XX (1891), pp. 850-880.

Farrand, Max, The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787 (4 vols., New Haven, 1911-1937).

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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	Degrees Minutes Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "	43°	04' 31"	70° 45' 23"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

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

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **Robert C. Post, Survey Historian**

ORGANIZATION: **Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service** DATE: **7/3/73**

STREET AND NUMBER: **1100 L Street, N.W.**

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

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.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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8. Significance (page 1) Governor John Langdon Mansion

characterize him as "the Rob. Morris of his State." Otto was much taken with Langdon's personality, calling him "one of the most interesting and amiable men in the United States."

Langdon was born on a farm near Portsmouth, worked briefly for a local merchant after attending grammar school, then took to the sea. Before long he began promoting commercial ventures on his own, and he had become a man of substance by his early thirties. In 1774, he and John Sullivan led the foray which captured Fort William and Mary in the harbor at Portsmouth. This was a clear-cut act of war, of course, and from then on Langdon never wavered in his support of the revolutionary cause. In 1776 he took charge of securing military supplies in New Hampshire, a duty he fulfilled with great ingenuity throughout the war. He engaged in extensive privateering and blockade-running, but also furnished many supplies personally, including several warships built and launched on Langdon Island. Among his most significant accomplishments was organizing and outfitting General Stark's expedition against Burgoyne. Tradition has it that after the fall of Ticonderoga he pledged his fortune to stemming the British advance. "If we succeed ... I will be remunerated," he declared. "If we do not then the property will be of no value to me."

Langdon personally commanded troops at Saratoga and in the Rhode Island campaign. During the same period he also pursued a political career, serving briefly as a delegate to the Continental Congress, and a long tenure as Speaker of the Legislature. "After the war," Beard writes, "Langdon's various mercantile and commercial interests took on a new life, and there is every evidence that in his worldly affairs he was uniformly prosperous." Turning most of these matters over to subordinates, he attended Congress again in 1783, served as a State Senator the next year, and in 1785 contested General Sullivan for the Presidency of the State. Sullivan was New Hampshire's great military hero. Yet, as Allan Nevins suggests, "it was also felt that the State owed much to John Langdon, the bluff sea captain, whose personality was more dashing than Sullivan's," and whose "enterprise gave to business a spring, when it was in a state of almost total stagnation."

Langdon defeated Sullivan in 1785, though Sullivan turned the tables the following year. During 1786 and 1787 Langdon served as Speaker of the Legislature, then he and Nicholas Gilman were delegated to attend the Constitutional Convention at Philadelphia. Since there were insufficient funds in the State Treasury, Langdon had to pay their expenses

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8. Significance (page 2) Governor John Langdon Mansion

out-of-pocket. By the time they arrived, late in July, the Convention had largely completed its work, although Langdon managed to go on record in favor of the Federalist program regarding commerce, taxation, and banking.

After the Convention adjourned, Langdon returned to New Hampshire, won another term as President, and participated in the State ratifying convention. Securing ratification was a formidable problem, because, in McDonald's words, of "the general apathy with which the people of the State greeted the Constitution." When New Hampshire finally did give its assent, however, it was the ninth State to do so and thereby brought the Constitution into legal existence and allowed the Federalists to proceed with organizing the new National Government. Langdon became a member of the first United States Senate, was elected its President pro tem, and, as such, administered the oath of office to both Washington and John Adams.

Although he initially supported many Federalist measures, Langdon soon started to betray marked Republican sympathies. Indeed, Otto had noted as early as 1788 that Langdon was "sincerely attached to France and even in favor of our institutions." By 1794, when he opposed ratification of the Jay Treaty, he definitely could be counted among the Anti-Federalists. Shortly, Nevins writes, he had become "so ardent a Republican that he expressed a wish that Washington could be removed from office," and in 1798 and 1799 he was among the more vocal opponents of the foreign policy of President Adams.

After leaving the Senate in 1801, Langdon helped organize the Republicans in New Hampshire, then served, for the third time, as Speaker of the Legislature. In 1805, he wrested the governorship from John Gilman (brother of Nicholas), and won re-election every year save one until 1811. During this period he declined both a Cabinet post and the Vice Presidential nomination. He retired from the political arena in 1812 and died seven years later.

Langdon entertained many notables at his Portsmouth home, including John Hancock, Lafayette, James Monroe, and Louis Philippe. Washington, a guest in 1789, remarked upon his lavish hospitality, as did the Marquis de Chastellux, who expressed admiration for his "elegant and well-furnished" mansion as well. Numerous testimonials bear witness to Langdon's patriotism, good sense, charm, and character, and also to his considerable influence during the Revolutionary, Federalist, and early Republican eras of American history.

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9. Bibliographical References

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McDonald, Forrest, We the People: The Economic Origins of the
Constitution (Chicago, 1958).

Nevins, Allan, The American States During and After the Revolution,
1775-1789 (New York, 1927).

"Portsmouth, An Architectural Evolution 1664-1890--Gov. John Langdon
Mansion," New Hampshire Profiles, December 1970, unp.

Robinson, William A., "John Langdon," Dictionary of American Biography,
Vol. X, pp. 587-588.

Strawbery Banke, Inc., Strawbery Banke Historic Preservation
(pamphlet, n.p., n.d.).