

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAY 1 1974

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Corliss, (John), House

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Kilton-Wilkinson House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
201 South Main Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Providence

STATE  
Rhode Island, 02903

CODE  
11

COUNTY:  
Providence

CODE  
007

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
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) Not in use

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Providence Redevelopment Agency

STREET AND NUMBER:  
40 Fountain Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Providence

STATE:  
Rhode Island, 02903

CODE  
11

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Providence City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Dorrance Street at Washington Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Providence

STATE  
Rhode Island, 02903

CODE  
11

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1962  
 Federal  
 State  
 County  
 Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Independence Avenue and 1st Street, S. E.

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE:  
District of Columbia

CODE  
11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)

Excellent     Good     Fair     Deteriorated     Ruins     Unexposed

(Check One)

Altered     Unaltered

(Check One)

Moved     Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Best known to-day as the John Corliss house, this neglected but still restorable double house was built c. 1716-1750 for Dinah Kilton (the north half) and David Wilkinson (the south half) to house, separately, two families. After George Corliss acquired one part in 1750 and the other part in 1763, it became a one-family residence.

This is a rectangular, simply-trimmed mid-XVIII-Century structure (an early ell has been demolished) of good size for its period, about 49 feet across its front and 36 feet deep. It is of two-and-one-half storeys capped by a gambrel roof, five bays across its wide front and four deep. (Since about 1855 it has been raised one storey and set on a brick ground-floor storey inserted for commercial use, though it was probably originally set close to the ground upon a stone foundation.) The house is timber-framed and planked, with exterior wall cover of narrow clapboarding. The third floor under the gambrel protrudes slightly beyond the end walls of the lower floors, and the roof itself is pierced on the east side by three pedimented dormers and may have had similar dormers on the west side (where most alteration, additions and damage have occurred), and this third storey has two windows at each end in the gables.

Externally the Corliss house is extremely plain, with trim consisting of the typical cyma eaves- and gable-cornices and the capping cornices of the protruded window-frames of the first storey and those on the sides and in the gables; the second-storey front and rear windows are--characteristic of the building's era--placed high to reach into the fascia band of the eaves-cornice and have no other surmounts. Window-sash around the house is all small-paned; those in the frontal dormers have eight-over-eight sash. Principal exterior doorways were replaced by windows when the house was raised. However, it is likely that when the house was a double one for Kilton and Wilkinson that there were two main doorways, one in the centre of the east elevation and one duplicating it on the west elevation; it is probable that these were tall, narrow apertures like the windows, containing transom lights over the doors and set in surrounds incorporating pilasters and a triangular pediment, as in other contemporary local buildings.

Internally, the plan was and is a central-hall, four-room one, though there has been later subdivision of rooms; and there were four end chimneys, only one of which remains showing. The Historic American Buildings Survey papers of 1962 remark on two stairways in the centre hall, which would have been understandable and necessary when the house was in double occupancy, and no doubt the centre hall was divided transversely, one resident entering from the east into his own stair-hall, the other entering from the west into his own. It is not possible to remark further upon the interior, which has been gutted of trim and much cut-up, although an XVIII-Century door still hangs here or there and plain plastered walls are to be seen, but without any of the wooden wainscot, chair-rails, cornices or mantels there may have been.

(See Continuation Sheet.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. 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) c. 1746-1750

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

The Corliss house is one of a very few survivors along South Main Street of what were the conspicuous dwellings of important citizens residing on Providence's busy waterfront-wharfage area, where such people had their prosperous business and shipping interests. The Kiltons and the Wilkinsons, who built the house, belonged to this group, and so did George Corliss, who bought it from them. Later among them was George Corliss's son John (by whose name the house is best known), who inherited the family residence from his father in 1790 and occupied it until it was sold to Isaac Bowen in 1815. The younger Corliss was, with Browns, Nightingales, Arnolds, Halseys and others, influential in Providence's commercial development and civic growth in the 1780's-1810 period and was even active in seeing that stage-plays were resumed in the city and that, in 1795, a theatre was erected for their presentation. His prosperity and main private interests lay in the wharves behind his house and in two stores or store-houses he owned to the south of his residence. A serious fire occurred in the South Main Street area in January, 1801, beginning in a warehouse to the rear of John Corliss's residence and sweeping about to engulf nearly twenty buildings near and south of this. The Corliss house caught alight several times but was somehow saved, the only survivor in the area of the fire. It is now the only pre-Revolutionary house in this section of South Main Street, excepting the Joseph Brown house at 50 South Main Street, some distance to the north, and the Rebecca Williams house across the street and to the south.

In 1815 John Corliss sold the house to Isaac Bowen, and there were other transfers of the property until that to Samuel Bullock in 1855, as mentioned above, when it was "jacked-up" and commercial premises inserted beneath--the old house on top being used only as tenements or, eventually, loft- or store-rooms. Such usage continued even after the property was acquired in 1929 by the Smith-Gibbs Company, dealers in ironwork and piping, and then in 1964 by the International Supply Company dealing in similar commodities. The latter firm left near the end of the 1960's. A second and recent fire burnt out a ~~storehouse~~ ground-level addition to the south and a large warehouse addition to the west, but once again the old residence escaped extinction.

Dilapidated, incongruously perched high, but possessing and dis-

(See Continuation Sheet.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Cady, John Hutchins: The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence, 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island, 1957), pp. 57, 60, 71.  
 Downing, Antoinette Forrester: Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Virginia, 1937), p. 240.

**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	° ' "	° ' "		41 ° 49 ' 23.41"	71 ° 24 ' 24.26"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

*with 19/300140*

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than one acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
 Richard B. Harrington, Consultant

ORGANIZATION: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission      DATE: Feb. 1, 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:  
 John Brown House, 52 Power Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence      STATE: Rhode Island, 02906      CODE: 44

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**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: Richard B. Harrington  
 Title: State Historic Preservation Officer

Date: Feb 1 1974

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

Richard B. Harrington  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 5/1/74

ATTEST:  
Wm. H. Huntley  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: 5.1.74

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7. Description.

Samuel Bullock, who bought the house, from one of a succession of owners after its sale by John Corliss's heirs, in 1855. was responsible for raising the original dwelling. Here, beneath it, he maintained a kind of carriage store-room and livery stable. Since Bullock's time the old residence and the newer substructure, plus western and southern additions (recently burnt and now razed) served only commercial purposes and suffered continuous internal re-division and abuse. It is fortunate that the Corliss house still survives to-day in a recognisable state on its original site. With the fire-damaged extensions gone, we now see this house in almost its original form, though far above ground and much requiring--and worthy of--over-all restoration.

8. Significance.

Playing historic and architectural character, the Corliss house awaits lowering, rehabilitation and preservation upon its site, where it can add much as a first-seen and important introduction to the recently restored South Main Street section.

