

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Newport	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

1. NAME

COMMON:
Vernon House

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Vernon House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
46 Clarke Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Newport 1st. Congressional District

STATE Rhode Island	CODE 44	COUNTY: Newport	CODE 005
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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	<input type="checkbox"/> 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 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:
Mrs. Quinto Maganini

STREET AND NUMBER:
"Montrose" Calhoun Drive

CITY OR TOWN: Greenwich	STATE: Rhode Island	CODE: 44
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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

STREET AND NUMBER:
Washington Square

CITY OR TOWN: Newport	STATE: Rhode Island	CODE: 44
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic American Buildings Survey (3 photos)

DATE OF SURVEY: 1937 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Division of Prints and Photographs

STREET AND NUMBER:
Library of Congress/Annex

CITY OR TOWN: Washington	STATE: D.C.	CODE: 11
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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

The Vernon House is a two story frame building with a low hipped roof surmounted by a balustraded walk. The three dormers on the front facade are topped by segmental pediments; the two dormers on each end have triangular pediments and the three on the rear have triangular pediments on the ends and a segmental one in the center. The exterior walls are given a rusticated woodblock treatment sanded during painting to achieve a roughcast effect simulating ashlar masonry. The scoring is handled to create the effect of flat arches above the lower windows and doors. A wooden beltcourse is also provided to complete the very successful illusion of a stone building. The doorway is framed by a well proportioned full Doric cornice and frieze, supported by square plain Doric pilasters. The rear door has a similar frontispiece, smaller in scale with a large round-headed window above which lights the stairlanding.

The interior, as altered in 1759, has the typical Georgian floor plan of a central hall with two rooms opening off either side on each floor. The wide hall is wainscoted with fielded paneling and has a molded cornice. An elliptical arch resting on large consoles is decorated with foliate insets in the spandrels. It serves as a frame for the graceful curve of the stair's banister with its elaborately twisted balusters.

When the house was enlarged by Bowler he installed paneled mantel breasts and wainscoted all four walls of the north parlor as well as a dentiled cornice and a two story overmantel with broken scroll pediment. The proportions of the overmantel are too large for the room and it seems to have been brought from another house. The dining room in the northeast corner is also wainscoted with fielded paneling and has a deep molded cornice.

In 1937, frescos of a Chinese character were discovered under the wall paneling in the northwest room. They were painted directly on smooth plaster, above the lower part painted to simulated wood paneling of the bolelection type. Molding, stiles, and rails were carefully depicted, then marbled, with panel faces reserved for pictorial scenes. These panels are rare scenes which indicate a knowledge of the cycle of Buddhist Hell and Chinese court punishments. Upstairs in the northwest room another original painting of a West Indies scene was found behind the mantel breast in 1879 during repairs. It was removed and subsequently disappeared.

The window on the stair landing is a single round-headed opening with side paneling to simulate a Palladian window. The upper hall itself has a modillioned cornice and paneled wainscoting. The upper rooms have exposed summer beams, encased in paneling. In a similar manner the plates (supports for the roof) are exposed and given a narrow molding to act as the room cornices.

BOUNDARY

The Vernon House is located at the northeast corner of the intersection

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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. 1700 1758

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

Vernon House, Newport, Rhode Island, is one of the city's most interesting buildings representing two periods of style. In the older section of the house, unusual wall murals were discovered which depict Chinese scenes of the Buddhist cycle. These probably date from the second quarter of the eighteenth century but this section itself dates from around the turn of the century. In 1759 a hall and rooms to the south were added to bring the building to its present appearance of a two story frame Georgian mansion, rusticated and sanded to imitate ashlar masonry with a wide classic doorway, modillioned and dentiled cornice, and a low hipped roof with flat balustraded deck. As completed the house exhibits the most academic proportions of any colonial house still standing in Newport. The Newport architect, Peter Harrison, designer of the Redwood Library and Brick Market, is often mentioned in connection with the Vernon House. Its horizontality and the impression of mass created by the heavy rustication hint at a Renaissance palazzo, creating an imposing colonial residence of great dignity and importance.

HISTORY

William Gibbs, a painter, owned a house on the site of the Vernon House in 1708 and evidence of the frame of the northern half indicates it belongs to the late seventeenth or early eighteenth century. The Gibbs-Gardner family owned the house until 1744. Two fragmentary deeds list Patrick Grant and Charles Bowler as subsequent owners. Bowler probably bought the house in 1753 when he became Collector of Revenue. In 1759 Bowler sold the property to his son, Metcalf, a successful merchant in the West India trade. Metcalf was active in local politics. Appointed as Chief Justice of the Rhode Island Supreme Court in 1776, he retained the post for a year while doubling as a secret agent for the British Crown. In Stiles map of 1758 the house is shown as two stories with one chimney, half the size of today's house. When he bought the house, Metcalf added the present hall and rooms on the south, transforming the structure into its current appearance.

In 1773 Bowler sold the house to William Vernon, a successful merchant and ardent patriot. When the French arrived in Newport in 1780, General Rochambeau was quartered in the house.

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of Clarke and Mary Streets, enclosed by a fence on a low stone wall which defines the boundary, beginning at the northwest corner on Clarke Street, the line runs east along the south boundary of the adjoining property (currently owned by Juliette Mary Giard) to the northeast corner at the property line, then south along the rear or west boundaries of the properties on Spring Street, (currently owned by Clyde W. Tartar and Edward B. Ward), to the north curb of Mary Street, then west along Mary Street to the east curb of Clarke Street, then north on Clarke Street to the point of beginning, as described in the deed registered on January 22, 1965 in the Newport City Hall.

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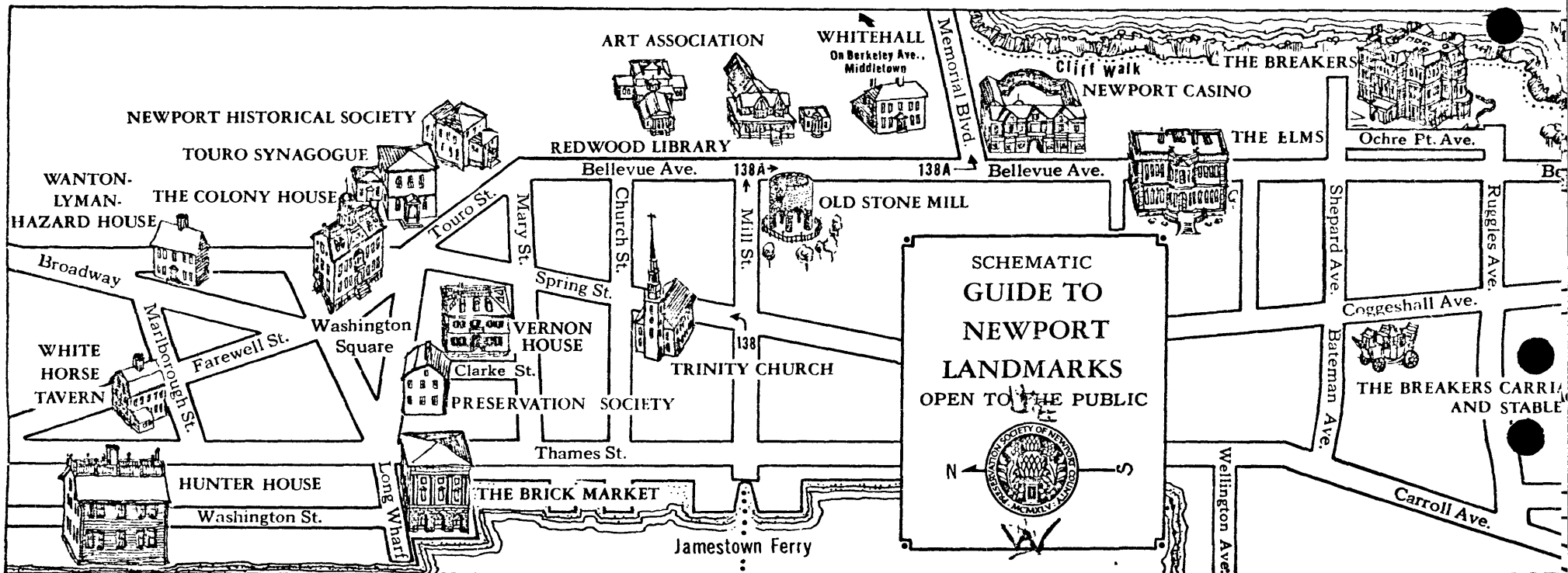
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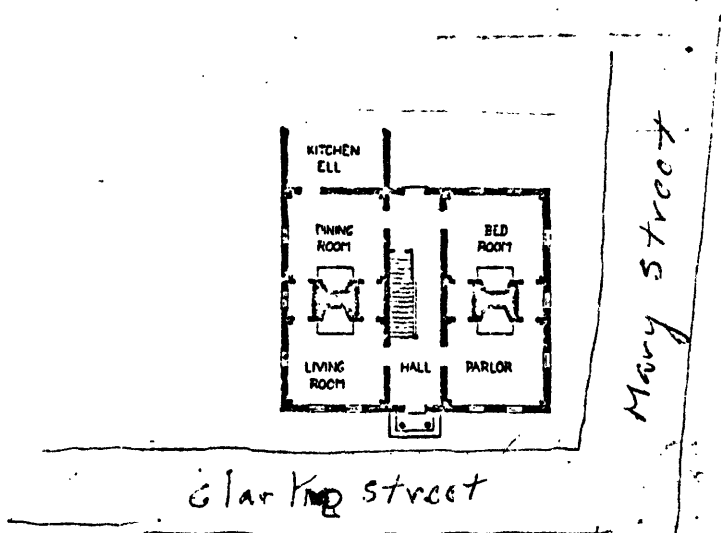
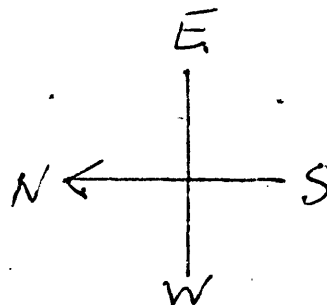
(Number all entries)

8. Significance second page

The house remained in the Vernon family until 1872 when it was purchased at auction by Harwood Read. In 1912, the Charity Organization Society, in order to save Rochambeau's headquarters, bought the house and made a partial restoration of it. It served as the headquarters of the Family Service Society until 1966 when it was purchased by Mrs. Quinto Maganini, who uses it as a private residence.



Vernon House



Sketch plan of the
Vernon House,
Newport, Rhode Island

CW. SNOLL. 11/13/07