

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**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
Peirce-Nichols House
AND/OR COMMON
Peirce-Nichols House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
80 Federal Street
CITY, TOWN
Salem
STATE
Massachusetts
VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
6th
COUNTY
Essex
CODE
25
CODE
009

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Essex Institute
STREET & NUMBER
132 Essex Street
CITY, TOWN
Salem
STATE
Massachusetts
VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Registry of Deed for Essex County
STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN
Salem
STATE
Massachusetts

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Historic American Buildings Survey (9 sheets)
DATE
1936-37
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Library of Congress/Annex Division of Prints and Photographs
CITY, TOWN
Washington
STATE
D.C.
 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

7 DESCRIPTION

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

The large, square, three-story house was built for Jerathmeel Peirce about 1782. In general style it did not differ from a number of great Massachusetts houses built prior to the Revolution. It did differ however, from all but a few buildings in its more literate adherence to and greater understanding of classical detail and academic profiles and proportions. The resulting effects is one of great solidity and dignity. The details come from a work used by most colonial carpenters, Batty Langley's Builder's Treasury, first published in 1740, but McIntire followed the designs with more literal faithfulness.

The frame clapboarded building is given monumentality by the use of giant fluted doric pilasters at each corner. McIntire's doorways were carefully designed as an important feature of the composition. His characteristic early form is seen at the Peirce House; a small pedimented portico of two full columns with three-quarter engaged columns, not pilasters, against the wall. A triglyph frieze with mutules gives added richness.

Windows in McIntire's houses rarely departed from a rectangular form. The arch-headed window in the rear hall of the Peirce house is unusual. There is also some formal elaboration of the window casings by cornices and friezes which are used on all three stories. The roof balustrade at the eaves is one of McIntire's first uses of this motif which was to become characteristic of his middle period.

The Stable here seems to be the earliest surviving by McIntire's hand. It is extremely heavy with massive archivolts and keystones. The composition of the front is in five parts consisting of central and end pavilions of smooth boarding with pediments and semicircular surface arches connected by clapboarded links with doors. On the garden side there is a single great central arch in an otherwise unbroken surface.

From the time of the remodeling of the house, 1801, date the addition to the offices which frame the stable court on the east. Three open elliptical arches are cut into the smooth boarded wall to the court, a blind arch of the same form, ornaments the solid south wall toward the street. The fence, with its tall garlanded urns and curved gate also date from 1801, after McIntire's exposure to the Adamesque style. It is continued at the side by Chinese lattice, unique among his fences. In 1924 when the fence was repaired parts of the fence which had earlier been removed were found in the coach house enabling it to be restored to its original design. The urns are replacements, carefully following the originals, several of which are now in the possession of the Essex Institute.

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

SPECIFIC DATES 1782-1801

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Samuel McIntire

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Samuel McIntire designed and built the Peirce-Nichols House in 1782 in what was, for that date, a conservative late Georgian style. The house is important, not only for its beautifully carved interior woodwork, but as the first major example of the talented craftsmanship of the 24 year old builder architect. In 1801, McIntire remodded some of the interior, providing an illustration of his later Adamesque style making the Peirce house an invaluable tool in the study of the development of one of America's first recognized designers of buildings.

History

Although the Peirce-Nichols House is perhaps the best known of all surviving houses attributed to McIntire, and the one most often cited as an example of his work, the connection is not established by any document. It rests on coherence of style with documented works and oral tradition.

Jerathmeel Peirce bought the land in 1779. The traditional date of the house, 1782, first appears in a contemporary account of the owner published in the Essex Institute Historical Collections in 1876. In 1801 the east parlor, hall and parlor chamber were remodeled. The stable, with its heavy arches, doubtless dates from the period of the first building. The other constructions around the court and the fence probably date from 1801.

The house was owned by a descendant of Jerathmeel Peirce until it became the property of the Essex Institute in 1917 and is now shown as a house museum.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Kimball, Fiske, Domestic Architecture of the American Colonies and of the Early Republic, New York, 1922.
- , Mr. Samuel McIntire, Carver, the Architect of Salem, 1940.
- Mixer, Knowlton, Old Houses of New England, New York, 1927.
- Pierson, William H. Jr., American Buildings and Their Architects: The Colonial and Neo-Classical Styles, Garden City, New York, 1970.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 9	3 4 3 9 3 0	4 7 0 9 3 6 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Peirce Nichols House is coterminous with its city lot, #80 Federal Street, and includes all stables and outbuildings, as recorded at the time of the transfer from Martha Nichols to the Essex Institute in 1917, deed 2359, p. 219-21.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE Patricia Heintzelman, Architectural Historian, Landmark Review Project
original form prepared by Charles Snell, 1968

ORGANIZATION	DATE
Historic Sites Survey	10/9/75
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
1100 L Street NW.	
CITY OR TOWN	STATE
Washington	D.C.

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

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE 2/4/77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Peirce-Nichols House

CONTINUATION SHEET

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On the interior, the floor plan follows the familiar Georgian arrangement of four rooms divided by a central hall. Both porches, woodwork of the west parlor and chamber and the back stairs date from the first building. The east parlor, hall and parlor chamber date from the 1801 remodeling.

Details of the original interior decoration were copied from Batty Langley's City and Country Builders and Workman's Treasury of Design (1740) which McIntire owned. In the early academic period there was generally little carved ornament on the interior. In the east parlor there is a dentilated cornice with simple egg and dart molding. The fireplace wall is fully paneled, with mantel, and eared overmantel. The doorways are heavily Georgian with a massive capping of dentils and egg and dart bed molding above and below a wide frieze. The windows have seats and their architraves, which extend to the room cornice, have a capping formed by the cornice which breaks out and around the window. The chamber above this also has a paneled fireplace wall, but the doors and windows are more simply treated as is usual in the second story.

The new parlor of 1801 is one of McIntires masterpieces in the Adamesque style. The cornice is richly carved with dentils and a frieze of reeded triglyps and rosetted metopes. The mantel is framed in Ionic pilasters, with Corinthian pilasters used for the overmantel. Pilasters used in the corner of the room have Composite capitals.

The window enframements, which again reach the cornice are light rectangular forms ornamented by an alternating pattern of flutes and plain panels. The door has a light cornice with dentiles like the room cornice but the frieze is garlanded with delicate swags. The dado molding is also ornamented by the alternating pattern of fluted and plain panels.

The main entrance hall also has a lightly scaled cornice with dentiles. The interior of the fanlighted entrance door is framed by delicate Corinthian pilasters and swags. All the doors in the remodeled rooms have an unusual horizontal flutting design, either on the enframing pilaster or as an inner molding. The upper chamber repeats the same refined motifs in a lightly dentiled cornice as do the garlands of the mantel and door friezes.

The stairs have solid brackets relieved by groups of flutings. The balusters are simple square sticks with sawn interlace reminiscent of Chinese lattice introduced at each alternate step. A lattice design also ornaments the stair fascia under each hallway landing.