Form 10-300 (July 1969)

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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OCATION AND SETTING:

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The John J. Brown House, located at 86 Spring Street, lies near to and within the Northeast boundary of Portland's Spring Street Historic District. It is one of the 23 specific buildings named in that National Register designation:

This urban setting lies south of and parallel to the commercial buildings on Free Street. Directly across Spring Street is a YWCA building. The buildings that flank this John J. Brown House were built in the same architectural period if not style.

The city block in which this house is located is bounded on the northeast by Oak Street, on the northwest by Spring Street, on the Southeast by Pleasant Street, and on the southwest by High Street. The block lies at the edge of and up on a low hillside. In this block are three other notable buildings that were named in Portland's Spring Street Historic District.

They are the McLaughlin-Davis Houses (Victorian-1869) 92 and 94 Spring Street, Charlotte A. Miller House (Gothic Renewal-1854) 84 Spring Street, and Nathan Cummings House (1826) 78 Spring Street.

POTENTIAL THREAT:

These four buildings plus most of the balance of the above described block have been sold to Harper Hotels, the Holiday Inn developer. These were all owned privately. Most of the whole block is scheduled to be razed. Lost will be four notable buildings. Included is the John J. Brown House the subject of this nomination. On the site there will be built a ten story in town hotel structure. The City of Portland, together with Greater Portland Landmarks, Inc., the established voice of historic preservation in Portland, have prevailed on the new owners, Harper Hotels, to allow the salvage of the John J. Brown House. The Harper Hotel people have given their consent and the City is investigating a new site in the adjacent neighborhood where this small gothic Revival House can be relocated or a new foundation. This is feasible and this concept enjoys the support of the City, the new owners, the Liaison Officer in Maine, his Review Body and the Greater Portland Landmarks, Inc.

Public, City of Portland funds, and private subscriptions will be employed in this relocation project. The Housing and Urban Development Agencies in Portland may assist in the costs incurred by a matching grant of one half of the costs. The HUD involvement in this situation is contingent on the need for the John J. Brown House to be named on the National Register of Historic Places.

CONSTRUCTION AND MATERIALS

The John J. Brown House is a good example of a mid-nineteenth century American Gothic Revival cottage. Comparison with an early painting of it in the Maine Historical Society, Portland reveals that it is in an original state of preservation. The Brown House is a two story wooden frame structure with a slate hipped roof. A gable projects from each side of the roof. There are two chimmnies on the left side. The exterior wooden walls are given a rusticated treatment to simulate the appearance of stone. The facade is symetrically composed. It consists of a projecting gabled middle section

Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

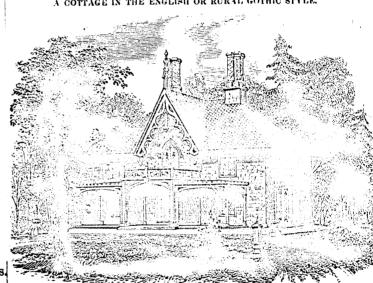
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(Number all entries) Continuation of 7. Description from which juts a portico ornamented with intricate Gothic style carving and surmounted by a delicate balustrade. Entrance to the house is gained through a carved Gothic style door with diamond shaped sidelights. A carved crest appears below the gable, which is decorated with finely carved bargeboards. In either side of the central section is a first and second story window with clear diamond shaped panes and a Gothic square headed motif above it. The other three sides of the cottage have randomly placed windows and carved crests. Their gables are also ornamented with carved bargeboards. Each of the four corners of the house possesses a buttrees-like decorative device. All these elements combine to create a romantic architectural composition which has delighted Portland and its visitors since 1845/

DESIGN II.

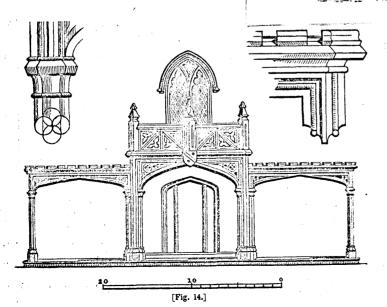
A COTTAGE IN THE ENGLISH OR RURAL GOTHIC STYLE.

Reference to 8.**S**ignificance (<u>Downing's **C**ottage</u> **R**esidences, New York, 1842)



48

COTTAGE RESIDENCES.





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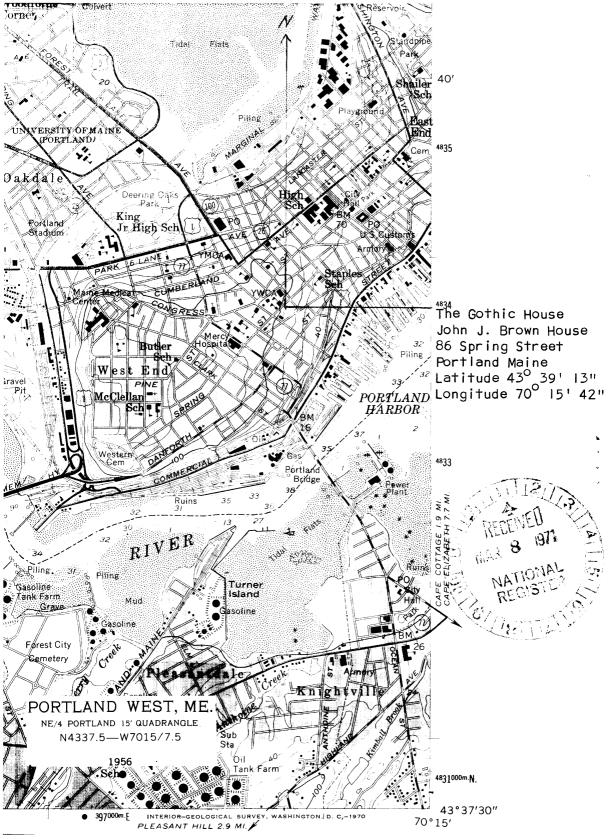
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of the John J. Brown House lies in its style and its architect. The structure is a good example of a mid-nineteenth century American Gothic Revival cottage in the mode of the popular revivalist Andrew Jackson Downing. Built in 1845, it was one of the earliest Gothic Revival homes in Maine and is now one of the finest remaining examples of its kind in the State. It is also the earliest known Maine commission of the architect Henry Rowe as well as the only surviving example of his work that can be fully documented as having been designed by him.

Henry Rowe was born in Ireland in 1810 and went to England in 1830, where he had ten years of practical experience in the employment of leading British architects. In 1840 he immigrated to America and spent five years in Boston and New York before coming to Portland, Maine. Rowe was an ardent Gothic Revivalist throughout his Maine career, which lasted until his death in 1870. He advertised on page fourteen of the Portland Reference Book and City Directory for 1846 that he could "supply gentlemen with plans, elevations, sections, and details of buildings, in every style and taste, from the most elaborate Gothic, down to the most simple and unadorned, on the most reasonable terms."

As has been stated, Henry Row's first known Maine commission was Portland's John J. Brown House. It is also the City's earliest example of a Gothic Revival cottage in the Downing mode. Because Rowe had been in New York and Boston during the first half of the 1840's, he may have bserved some of the work of A. J. Downing's followers first-hand. Rowe's Brown cottage seems based upon figures nine and fourteen of Downing's Cottage Residences, New York, 1842. (See continuation page's zerox copies). The overall treatment is similar, but Rowe's house is more compact. Its roof does not spread as much. It is made of wood pieced to resemble Downing's stone. The central protruding gables are much the same. Rowe discarded the pinnacle and flanking porches. In addition, the balustrade of the portico was not as intricately executed. Yet whatever Rowe's design might lack including the carved creste, the buttress--like corner posts, and the hables on all four sides of the hipped roof. Thus, the John J. Brown House can be viewed as the product of a creative designer working within a national|ly popular mode of architecture.

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3. CLASSIFICATION

OWNER OF PROPERTY

Portland

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Although Portland's Gothic House has been moved from one end of Spring Street to the other, its exterior and interior appearance remain substantially unchanged since its completion in 1845. Its original state of preservation is confirmed by a mid-19th century painting of the house at the Maine Historical Society.

The Gothic House is a square frame structure which is situated on a modern concrete foundation, stands two stories high, and has a slated hip roof. The entire dwelling is sheathed, in a rusticated wooden treatment to simulate stone. A buttress-like ornament appears at each corner of the house.

The facade or south wall is composed of three bays, a central projecting bay with a gable roof and two flanking bays which remain part of the main house. The main entrance is located on the first story of the central bay. The doorway has a pointed arch door which is flanked by diamond paned sidelights with rounded tops. The door and sidelights are outlined with a raised molding which encompasses these three elements and forms a broadly pointed arch above them.

Over the entrance is a portico decorated by such medieval details as carved rosettes and shields. A series of pointed arches and modified pinnacles make up the portico balustrade. A double pointed arch window is found in the central bay of the second story. This window contains multi-colored diamond panes of glass and is accented by a pronounced pointed arch molding above it. Within the gable is an intricately carved shield. The gable itself is ornamented with carved bargeboards.

At either side of the projecting central gable is a window on each of the two stories. These windows are divided into four sections, each of which has clear diamond paned glass. Above each window appears a Gothic square headed ornament. The other three walls of the house have randomly placed windows and carved crests. Gables with carved bargeboards are located on the east and west walls.

When William Willis visited the Gothic House on October 15, 1845, he noted in his diary that John J. Brown "carrys his Gothic style into all the finishings: it is a neat and convenient affair." Willis's observation remains true today for the interior as well as the exterior. Such interior features as doors, doorways, fireplaces, and window enframements are carried out with simple wooden Gothic trim in a dark brown stain. Both the exterior and interior architectural elements of the Gothic House combine to create a romantic composition which has delighted Portland since 1845.

PERIOD (Check One or More as	Appropriate)		
Pre-Columbian	16th Century	☐ 18th Century	20th Century
☐ 15th Century	☐ 17th Century	🔀 19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicab	le and Known) 1845		
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Ch	eck One or More as Appropri	ate)	
Abor iginal	☐ Education	☐ Political	Urban Planning
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Commerce	Literature	itarian	
Communications	Military	Theater	
☐ Conservation	Music	☐ Transportation	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of the John J. Brown House lies in its style and its architect. The structure is a good example of a mid-nineteenth century American Gothic Revival cottage in the mode of the popular revivalist Andrew Jackson Downing. Built in 1845, it was one of the earliest Gothic Revival homes in Maine and is now one of the finest remaining examples of its kind in the State. It is also the earliest known Maine commission of the State. It is also the earliest known Maine commission of the architect Henry Rove as well as the only surviving example of his work that can be fully documented as having been designed by him.

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(See Significance Sheet)

9. MAJOR	BIBLIOGRAPHICAL RE	FERENCES									
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Form 10-300a (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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Cumberland	
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(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

8. Significance

The significance of the Gothic House to Portland was demonstrated in the spring of 19/1 when the structure faced imminent destruction. Both a highway and a Holiday Inn were scheduled for construction on the site. After considerable negotiation, Greater Portland Landmarks, Inc., a local preservation group, secured the Gothic House from the Holiday Inn developer on the grounds that it would be moved from its downtown Spring Street location. At the opposite end of Spring Street, Landmarks purchased a vacant lot upon which to place the house. It was successfully moved there in June of 1971. The entire project, including the moving expenses and the new land and foundation, cost approximately \$39,000, which was pledged by five local banks and several private individuals. In August of 1971, the house was sold with preservation convenants at the \$39,000 to return the pledged amount. Present and future owners are restricted to residential use and to the maintainance of all exterior as well as key interior architectural features.

The Gothic House was unaltered and unharmed during its move from one end of Spring Street to the other. It is now sited in the midst of Portland's finest and most stable 19th century neighborhood, the Western Promenades. After more than three years in its new location, the Gothic House appears as though it had always been there.



