

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC John Quincy Adams Birthplace

AND/OR COMMON John Quincy Adams Birthplace

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 141 Franklin Street

CITY, TOWN Quincy VICINITY OF Eleventh

STATE Massachusetts CODE 025 COUNTY Norfolk CODE 021

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input 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	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input 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 City of Quincy (administered by Quincy Historical Society)

STREET & NUMBER City Hall

CITY, TOWN Quincy 02169 VICINITY OF STATE Massachusetts

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

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

STREET & NUMBER High Street

CITY, TOWN Dedham 02026 STATE Massachusetts

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey (exterior photo)

DATE 1941  FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN Washington 20540 STATE District of Columbia

## 7 DESCRIPTION

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

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The John Quincy Adams Birthplace is located near the west curblin of Franklin Street (number 141) just north of its intersection with Presidents Avenue. The house is remarkably similar in size and design to the John Adams Birthplace, located some 75 feet north of it on the same property (133 Franklin Street). Beyond this second house, the property consists of park-like open land acquired and maintained by the City of Quincy as a protective buffer for the two birthplaces.

In its present form, the John Quincy Adams Birthplace is a frame and clapboard house of the "salt-box" type, consisting of a ground-floor room and upper chamber on either side of a central chimney and a leanto. Although the leanto is an addition, the long rear slope of the gabled roof extends from the ridge to the eaves in an unbroken line. Windows are 12/12 double-hung sash. The main entrance, at the center of the 3-bay facade, is flanked by pilasters carrying a projecting entablature and a triangular pediment. A **second** entrance, also flanked by pilasters carrying an entablature, is located on the side of the house at its southeast corner.

A dated brick at the upper left of the fireplace in the southeast chamber indicates that the main portion of the John Quincy Adams Birthplace was constructed in 1716. However, there is some evidence, including the slightly off-center arrangement of the windows and door on the front facade, to support the theory that the house incorporates elements, among them the chimney stack and foundation, of an earlier and smaller dwelling on the site, believed to have been built about 1663. That the leanto is a later addition is shown by the second set of rafters visible in the attic; its exact date is unknown but it is generally believed to have been in place when Deacon John Adams purchased the house in 1744. The pilasters and pediment of the main entrance are also later additions, possibly installed in 1764 for John Adams and his bride Abigail. The only change in the house which can definitely be attributed to John Adams is the doorway installed at the southeast corner, giving direct access to the former kitchen, which served as his law office.

Extensive work was done on the house in 1896 in preparation for its use as the headquarters of the Quincy Historical Society. A new roof was installed. Board siding was put on the outer walls and new clapboards nailed over it; during this process most of the old filling of soft brick and clay was removed from the front and side walls. Small paned window sash, removed not long before, were found in the attic and set in their former positions. Interior trim and paneling was restored to the color of its earliest coat of paint. Finally, the whole house was raised about two feet to correspond with the current level of Franklin Street.

Further work was done on the Birthplace in 1923; the major item then was the installation of a new roof of split cedar shingles. In 1950, the joists under the ground floor were replaced. With the exception of part of the leanto, the old wide floor boards were reused but in an inverted position.

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With the exception of a few pieces donated by the Adams family, the furnishings of the house are not original. However, it does contain authentic 18th and early 19th century items given to the Historical Society by the descendants of old Quincy families.

The boundaries of the National Historic Landmark designation for the John Quincy Adams Birthplace, defined in Item 10, include that house, the adjacent John Adams Birthplace, and the protective open land described above.

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

SPECIFIC DATES 1716; 1761-83; 1803-07 BUILDER/ARCHITECT unknown

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This 18th century "salt-box" type house was the home of two American Presidents and the birthplace of one of them. John Adams, second President of the United States, owned the house from 1761 until 1803, though he did not occupy it after 1783. For part of that time, the old kitchen on the southern end of the house served as his law office and it was there that he prepared the draft of the Massachusetts Constitution, ratified in 1780, which provided a model for the form of general government outlined in the Federal Constitution of 1787. John Adams' son, John Quincy Adams, sixth President, was born in the house in 1767 and lived there during his childhood and briefly as an adult.

The John Quincy Adams Birthplace remained the property of the Adams family until 1940, when it was deeded to the City of Quincy. The Quincy Historical Society was given permission to use the house as its headquarters in 1896 and continues to administer it on behalf of the City. The John Quincy Adams Birthplace is open to the public from April 19 to October 1, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., Tuesday through Sunday.

### History of the House

The land on which the John Quincy Adams Birthplace stands was originally the property of Gregory Belcher, one of the earliest settlers in that part of Braintree which later became Quincy, Massachusetts. The first house on the site is thought to have been built for his son, Samuel Belcher, about the time of his marriage in 1663. Samuel Belcher's oldest son, Gregory, inherited the house on his father's death in 1679 and replaced it with the main portion of the present house in 1716 (elements of the first house may be incorporated in the second). The leanto is a later addition but predates the purchase of the property in 1744 by Deacon John Adams, who already owned the house immediately to the north (the John Adams Birthplace).

Deacon Adams, who died in 1761, left the house to his oldest son, John Adams, who moved there following his marriage to Abigail Smith in 1764. He subsequently added a separate entrance to the old kitchen on the southern side of the house and used that room for his law office. His son, John Quincy Adams, was born in the north chamber in 1767. After 1772, John Adams' increasing law practice and activity in public affairs made it convenient for him to live part of the time in Boston, but his wife and family remained at the Quincy house until the end of the Revolutionary War.

After 1783, the house was occupied by various tenants. In 1803, John Quincy Adams purchased his birthplace (and the adjacent Adams house) from his father and lived there from 1805 until 1807, when he moved to Boston. Thereafter the house was occupied by tenants until about 1885, when the surrounding land was sold for houselots.

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The Birthplace remained vacant until 1896, when Charles Francis Adams, Jr., grandson of John Quincy Adams, had it restored for use as the headquarters of the Quincy Historical Society, which had been formed in 1893. In 1940, the Adams family deeded the John Quincy Adams Birthplace (and the adjacent John Adams Birthplace) to the City of Quincy. Since that time, the Historical Society has administered the property on behalf of the City.

Biographical Summary, John Quincy Adams

John Quincy Adams was born on July 11, 1767, in that part of Braintree which became Quincy, Massachusetts. His father and mother, John and Abigail Adams, had a strong influence on his education after the Revolutionary War deprived Braintree of its only schoolmaster. In 1778 and again in 1780, the boy accompanied his father to Europe. He studied at a private school in Paris in 1778-79 and at the University of Leiden in 1780, acquiring an excellent knowledge of French and a smattering of Dutch.

In 1781, at the age of fourteen, he accompanied Francis Dana, American Envoy to Russia, as his private secretary and interpreter of French. After a year in St. Petersburg, during which Dana was never received by the Russian government, Adams traveled by way of Scandinavia, Hanover, and the Netherlands to join his father in Paris. There he acted informally as a secretary to the American commission negotiating the treaty that concluded the American Revolution. The young Adams returned to Massachusetts and graduated from Harvard College in 1787. He then read law at Newburyport with Theophilus Parsons and was admitted to the bar in Boston in 1790.

While attempting to build his practice, he produced a series of newspaper articles that brought him to the attention of President Washington and resulted in his appointment in 1794 as United States Minister to the Netherlands. Two years later, Washington appointed him Minister to Portugal but, on the election of his father John Adams as President, the young diplomat's destination was changed to Berlin. He assumed his new post in 1797, shortly after his marriage to Louisa Catherine Johnson in London. Adams was recalled from Berlin following his father's defeat by Thomas Jefferson in the presidential election of 1800. He reached Boston in 1801 and the next year was elected to the Massachusetts Senate. In 1803 the Massachusetts Legislature elected him to the Senate of the United States.

Though Adams had previously been regarded as a member of the Federalist party, he found himself in disagreement with its current policies. He arrived in Washington too late to vote for ratification of the treaty for purchase of Louisiana, opposed by the other Federalist senators, but voted for appropriations to carry it out and announced that he would have voted for the purchase treaty itself. In 1807, he supported President Jefferson's suggestion of an embargo and urged instant action on it. The Embargo Act was distinctly unpopular with Massachusetts Federalists and his support of it cost Adams his Senate seat.

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When his successor was chosen in June 1808, several months before the usual time for electing a senator for the next term, Adams quickly resigned. In that same year, he attended the Republican congressional caucus which nominated Madison for the presidency, thus associating himself with that party. President Madison appointed Adams as the American Envoy to Russia in 1809 and in 1815 he became Minister to the Court of St. James. He returned to the United States in 1817 to become Secretary of State in the cabinet of President Monroe.

As Secretary of State, Adams played a leading role in the acquisition of Florida. In 1819, after lengthy negotiations, Adams won a treaty in which the Spaniards abandoned all claims to territory east of the Mississippi; in return, the United States relinquished all claim to what is now Texas. This was the first treaty to draw a boundary of the United States from the Atlantic to the Pacific. Adams was also responsible for the conclusion of the treaty of 1818 with Great Britain, laying down the northern boundary of the United States from the Lake of the Woods to the Rocky Mountains along the line of 49° N. latitude.

Adams was one of four candidates for the presidency in the election of 1824. When none of the candidates received a majority of electoral votes--Andrew Jackson received 99, Adams 84, William H. Crawford 41, and Henry Clay 37--the election was decided in the House of Representatives. Clay, long an opponent of Jackson, cast his influence for Adams and thereby secured his election on the first House ballot. Though the country as a whole prospered during Adams' presidency (1825-29), it was in many respects a political failure because of the virulent opposition of the Jacksonians, and Adams was defeated by Jackson in the election of 1828.

Adams retired to private life in 1829 but was elected to the House of Representatives in the following year. Throughout his career in Congress (1831-49), he was conspicuous as an opponent of the expansion of slavery. In 1839, he presented to the House a resolution for a constitutional amendment providing that every child born in the United States after July 4, 1842, should be born free; that with the exception of Florida no new state should be admitted to the Union with slavery; that neither slavery nor the slave trade should exist in the District of Columbia after July 4, 1845. When the 21st House rule, the famous "gag" rule imposed by southern Congressmen against all discussion of slavery, effectively blocked debate on Adams' proposed amendment, he began a campaign which ended in the repeal of that rule in 1844. Adams was also a supporter of the arts and science and did much to see that the Smithson bequest, a gift to the United States from an eccentric Englishman, was used to create and endow the Smithsonian Institution.

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Perhaps the most dramatic event in Adams' life was its end. On February 21, 1848, while protesting an honorary grant of swords by Congress to the generals who had won what he considered a "most unrighteous war" with Mexico, Adams suffered a cerebral stroke, fell unconscious to the floor of the House, and died in the Capitol two days later. His body was returned to Quincy where it lies, with those of his wife and parents, in the crypt of the First Parish Church.

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Bemis, Samuel Flagg, John Quincy Adams and the Foundations of American Foreign Policy,  
(1949).

John Quincy Adams and the Union (1956).

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western curbline of Franklin Street; thence, southwesterly along said western curb-  
line to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: The boundary includes the John Adams and the John Quincy Adams birthplaces because they are on the same city lot and are both owned by the city of Quincy and are both administered by the Quincy Historical Society. Separating them would be difficult and appears unnecessary. The park is included because it was a part of the original farm.

