

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC John Adams Birthplace

AND/OR COMMON

John Adams Birthplace

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

133 Franklin Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Quincy

VICINITY OF

Eleventh

STATE

Massachusetts

CODE
025COUNTY
Norfolk

CODE

021

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS☐ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO

PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE☐ COMMERCIAL☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ GOVERNMENT☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ MILITARY☒ MUSEUM☐ PARK☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ RELIGIOUS☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ OTHER**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME City of Quincy (administered by Quincy Historical Society)

STREET & NUMBER

City Hall

CITY, TOWN

Quincy 12169

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 ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Division of Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN

Washington 20540

STATE

District of Columbia

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

___ EXCELLENT

X GOOD

___ FAIR

___ DETERIORATED

___ RUINS

___ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

___ UNALTERED

X ALTERED

CHECK ONE

X ORIGINAL SITE

___ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The John Adams Birthplace stands on the west side of Franklin Street (number 133) approximately 150 feet from its intersection with Presidents Avenue. The house is remarkably similar in size and design to the John Quincy Adams Birthplace, located about 75 feet south of it on the same property (141 Franklin Street). The property north and west of the John Adams Birthplace consists of park-like open land acquired and maintained by the City of Quincy as a protective buffer for the two birthplace houses.

In its present form, the John 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. Though the leanto is a later addition, the long rear slope of the gabled roof extends from the ridge to the eaves in an unbroken line. Windows in the house are 12/12 double-hung sash. The main entrance, at the center of the 3-bay front facade, is flanked by pilasters carrying an entablature and a triangular pediment. This "frontispiece" is also a later addition.

A dated brick found under the ground sill at the southeast corner of the house indicates that the main portion of it was constructed in 1681. The fact that the doorway and windows are not centered on the front facade lends some support to the theory that the eastern end of the house rests on the foundation of the original building on the site, probably built c. 1650. The exact date of the leanto is not known but it is generally believed to predate the purchase of the house by Deacon John Adams in 1720. The present appearance of the parlor, particularly its paneling, seems to be the result of "improvements" made by Thomas Boylston Adams, son of President John Adams, when he moved to the house in 1810.

Substantial work was done on the house in 1896 when it became the headquarters of the Adams Chapter, Daughters of the Revolution (not the Daughters of the American Revolution). The early fireplaces, which had been bricked up or reduced in size, were reopened. The original doorway to the cellar, at the left of the kitchen fireplace, had been removed; a 17th century door, taken from a house in Hingham, Massachusetts, was set in its place. Two-paned window sash of the Victorian era were replaced by appropriate small-paned sash. The chief alteration was the removal of the partition between the original kitchen and the newer one in the leanto to create a meeting space. Custodian's quarters were made in the western part of the leanto and a small addition was constructed behind it for a kitchen.

Further work was done when the Quincy Historical Society took over administration of the house in 1950. A new partition was installed between the two kitchens; however, it lacks the thickness of the original and has no dado as do the other walls in the old kitchen. The entire leanto was renovated for use by the custodian and electricity was installed in that part of

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
___PREHISTORIC	___ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	___COMMUNITY PLANNING	___LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	___RELIGION
___1400-1499	___ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	___CONSERVATION	___LAW	___SCIENCE
___1500-1599	___AGRICULTURE	___ECONOMICS	___LITERATURE	___SCULPTURE
___1600-1699	___ARCHITECTURE	___EDUCATION	___MILITARY	___SOCIAL HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	___ART	___ENGINEERING	___MUSIC	___THEATER
___1800-1899	___COMMERCE	___EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	___PHILOSOPHY	___TRANSPORTATION
___1900-	___COMMUNICATIONS	___INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	___OTHER (SPECIFY)
		___INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1681; 1735 BUILDER/ARCHITECT not known

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This 17th century frame and clapboard house in Quincy, Massachusetts, was the birthplace and boyhood home of John Adams, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, principal author of the Constitution of Massachusetts, which became a model for the Federal Constitution, first Vice-President, and second President of the United States.

The John Adams Birthplace remained in the Adams family until 1940, when it was deeded to the City of Quincy. From 1896 until 1950, it was used as the headquarters of the Adams Chapter, Daughters of the Revolution (not the Daughters of the American Revolution); since 1950, it has been administered by the Quincy Historical Society. The John 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 John Adams Birthplace stands on land which originally belonged to William Needham; the first house on the site is thought to have been built by him about 1650. The present house was probably built in 1681 (the date cut in a brick found at the southeast corner of the foundation when the house was renovated in 1896) but, according to some sources, may incorporate elements of the 1650 building. In 1720, Deacon John Adams purchased the house and some seven acres of land. The land had already been added to the house by that date. John Adams, Deacon Adams' first son was born in the east chamber of the house in 1735.

Following the death of Deacon Adams in 1761, the house was left to his second son, Peter Boylston Adams, who occupied it until his marriage in 1768. Peter Adams sold the house to his older brother John in 1774. Deacon Adams' widow still lived in the house at that time and continued to do so until 1780. The house was then rented to various tenants until 1803, when John Adams sold both it and the second Adams family house, located immediately to the south, to his son John Quincy Adams. Thomas Boylston Adams, another son of John Adams, lived in the house with his family from 1810 until 1818. Thereafter, the house was again occupied by various tenants until about 1885, when most of the surrounding farm was sold for house lots.

The John Adams Birthplace then remained vacant until 1896, when Charles Francis

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Adams, Charles Francis. The Works of John Adams, with Life (1850-56).
Adams, Henry. "The Birthplaces of Presidents John and John Quincy Adams in Quincy, Massachusetts", Old-Time New England, The Bulletin of the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (January, 1936).
Bowen, Catherine Drinker. John Adams and the American Revolution (1950).
Sprague, Waldo C. The President John Adams and President John Quincy Adams Birthplaces, Quincy, Massachusetts (1959; reprinted 1964)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .70 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 19 334640 46780810
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(shown in red on attached ~~except~~ from Quincy Zoning Plan #3006): Beginning at the intersection of the western curblin of Franklin Street and the eastern curblin of Presidents Avenue; thence, northwesterly along said eastern curblin to its intersection with the southern line of property now or formerly owned by Mary A. Omar (identified as Plot 3 on Quincy Zoning Plan #3006); thence, along the southern and eastern lines of said property to the southern (cont'd)

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 Polly M. Rettig, Historian, Landmark Review Project; original form prepared by Charles E. Shedd, Jr., Historian, 2/19/60

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey

DATE

3/5/75

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L. Street, N.W.

TELEPHONE

523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington 20240

STATE

District of Columbia

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

Landmark Dec 4, 1966
LOCAL Designated:
Boundary Certified to the
Henry F...
4/3/78 date

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-663) 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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

N/A National Historic Landmark

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

(NATIONAL HISTORIC
LANDMARKS)

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

4/3/78

DATE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

1

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the house.

With the exception of a few pieces donated by the Adams family, most of them in the east chamber where John Adams was born, the furnishings of the house are not original. However, the house 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 Adams Birthplace (defined in Item 10) include that house, the adjacent John Quincy Adams Birthplace, and the protective open space described above. The land is part of the original Adams farm.

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Adams, Jr., great-grandson of President John Adams, allowed the Adams Chapter, Daughters of the Revolution, to restore the house and use it as a headquarters. The house was opened to the public under the Chapter's supervision the following year. Though the Adams family deeded the John Adams Birthplace to the City of Quincy in 1940, the Daughters of the Revolution continued to occupy it until 1950 when the Adams Chapter was dissolved. Since that time, the house has been administered for the City and opened to the public by the Quincy Historical Society.

BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY, JOHN ADAMS

John Adams was born in what is now Quincy (originally a part of Braintree), Massachusetts, on October 19 (old style; October 30, new style), 1735. He graduated from Harvard College in 1755 and for a time taught school in Worcester, Massachusetts. He then studied law in the office of James Putnam and in 1758 was admitted to the bar in Boston. In 1764, Adams married Abigail Smith, daughter of the Congregational minister of Weymouth, Massachusetts.

Adams first gained wide public attention--and a position as a leader of the Massachusetts Whigs--during the controversy surrounding Parliament's passage of the Stamp Act in 1765. In that year he drafted the instructions which were sent by the town of Braintree to its representatives in the Massachusetts Legislature and which were a model for other towns in drawing up their own instructions to their representatives. In August, 1765, he contributed four anonymous articles to the Boston Gazette (published in London in 1768 as A Dissertation on the Canon and Feudal Law) in which he argued that the opposition of the colonies to the Stamp Act was part of a continuous struggle between individualism and corporate authority. And finally, in December, 1765, he delivered a speech before the Governor and Council in which he declared the Stamp Act invalid on the ground that Massachusetts was without representation in Parliament and, therefore, had not assented to it.

Adams gained further attention in 1770 when he served as lawyer for the defense in the trial of the British soldiers charged with murder as a result of the so-called "Boston Massacre". Though public sentiment was strongly against the accused, Adams was recognized for his upright and patriotic conduct in the case and the following year was elected to the Massachusetts Legislature by a large majority.

From 1774 to 1778, Adams served in the Continental Congress, where he was a strong and impatient advocate of the separation of the American colonies from Great Britain. In June, 1776, he was appointed with Jefferson, Franklin,

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Livingstone, and Sherman to draft a declaration of independence. At the request of the other members of the committee, the document was written by Jefferson, but it was Adams who took the lead in the debate on its adoption.

In 1778, Adams served briefly as a member of the American commission which secured a treaty of alliance with France. He returned home in time to be elected a member of the convention which framed the Massachusetts Constitution, adopted in 1780. With James Bowdoin and Samuel Adams, he formed the subcommittee which prepared the draft of the document, the greatest part of which was his own work. The Massachusetts Constitution furnished a model for other state governments and from it was adopted the form of general government outlined in the Federal Constitution of 1787.

Before the Massachusetts Constitution was ratified, Adams returned to Europe as minister plenipotentiary for negotiating a treaty of peace and a treaty of commerce with Great Britain. Subsequently Franklin, Jefferson, John Jay, and Henry Laurens were appointed to cooperate with Adams. Jefferson did not cross the Atlantic and Laurens took little part in the negotiations; this left the management of the mission to the other three. Eventually, political conditions in Great Britain made the conclusion of peace almost a necessity for the British ministry, and the American negotiators were able to secure a very favorable treaty, signed on November 30, 1782. During this period, Adams had also visited the Netherlands and at The Hague was eminently successful, gaining recognition of the United States as an independent government and negotiating both a loan and a treaty of amity and commerce. In 1785, he was appointed the first American minister to the Court of St. James.

Adams received the second largest number of votes in America's first presidential election, held in 1789, and thus became Vice-President. He served in that office for eight years, becoming a leader of the Federalist party. In 1796, on the refusal of Washington to accept a third term, Adams defeated Jefferson for the presidency. His term (1797-1801) was marked by a succession of intrigues which embittered his later life, by events such as the passage of the Alien and Sedition Acts, which brought discredit to the Federalist party, and by factional splits within that party itself. In 1800, Adams was again the Federalist candidate for the presidency, but distrust of him in his own party, the popular disapproval of the Alien and Sedition Acts, and the popularity of his opponent, Jefferson, combined to cause his defeat. Adams then retired into private life and died at Quincy on July 4, 1826.

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ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 2

John Adams Birthplace, Quincy, Massachusetts

Geographical Data, Verbal Boundary Description (continued)

line of property now or formerly owned by J-Ray Realty Corporation (Plot 19 on Plan #3006); thence, easterly along said southern line to its intersection with the western curblineline of Franklin Street; thence, southwesterly along said western curblineline to the point of beginning.



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1 NAME

HISTORIC John Adams Birthplace

AND/OR COMMON

John Adams Birthplace

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Quincy

____ VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Norfolk

STATE

Massachusetts

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT Polly M. Rettig, Landmark Review Project DATE OF PHOTO November, 1974

NEGATIVE FILED AT Historic Sites Survey, NPS, 1100 L Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20240

4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO. 1

view from southeast of front facade



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PHOTO NO. 2

view from southwest of front and side elevations