MT 1865-1900

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries – complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Massachusetts
COUNTY:	Suffolk
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	

1. NAME

COMMON: Charles Sumner House (NHL)

AND/OR HISTORIC: Charles Sumner House

NHL

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 20 Hancock Street

CITY OR TOWN: Boston

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

STATE: Massachusetts — CODE:

COUNTY: Suffolk — CODE:

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP		STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☐ District ☒ Building	☐ Public	Public Acquisition:	☒ Occupied	Yes:
☐ Site ☐ Structure	☒ Private	☐ In Process	☐ Unoccupied	☐ Restricted
☐ Object	☐ Both	☐ Being Considered	☐ Preservation work in progress	☐ Unrestricted
				☒ No

PRESENT USE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

☐ Agricultural	☐ Government	☐ Park	☐ Transportation	☐ Comments
☐ Commercial	☐ Industrial	☐ Private Residence	☒ Other *(Specify)*	
☐ Educational	☐ Military	☐ Religious		
☐ Entertainment	☐ Museum	☐ Scientific	Apartment House.	

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: Mrs. Helen C. Smith

STREET AND NUMBER: 20 Hancock Street

CITY OR TOWN: Boston — STATE: Massachusetts — CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Suffolk County Courthouse or City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: Boston — STATE: Massachusetts — CODE:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: ☐ Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: — STATE: — CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: COUNTY: FOR NPS USE ONLY ENTRY NUMBER DATE

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☐ Excellent	☐ Good	☒ Fair	☐ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
	(Check One)		(Check One)			
	☒ Altered	☐ Unaltered	☐ Moved		☒ Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL *(if known)* PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Sumner House is a Federal style four-story townhouse in which Charles Sumner lived for over thirty years of his life. While not in the best of repair, owing to the limited finances of the present owner, the floor plan, mantelpieces and woodwork of the Sumner house are intact.

The central and original block has a standard side hall plan. The hall enters into a front parlor and rear sitting room, beyond, which is a kitchen. The upper floors have a similar arrangement of rooms.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

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 Applicable and Known)*

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE *(Check One or More as Appropriate)*

Aboriginal	☐ Education	☒ Political	☐ Urban Planning
☐ Prehistoric	☐ Engineering	☐ Religion/Philosophy	☐ Other *(Specify)*
☒ Historic	☐ Industry	☐ Science	
☐ Agriculture	☐ Invention	☐ Sculpture	
☐ Architecture	☐ Landscape Architecture	☒ Social/Humanitarian	
☐ Art	☐ Literature	☐ Theater	
☐ Commerce	☐ Military	☐ Transportation	
☐ Communications	☐ Music		
☐ Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Charles Sumner House was the residence of one of the most pivotal figures in American politics both before and after the Civil War. Justifiably criticized for his intemperate speech and intolerant views--a northern equivalent of the "fire-eating" secessionists of the south--he was the most outspoken political opponent of slavery. Entering the Senate in 1851, he is credited with signaling the disaffection with the Compromise of 1850 and placing the anti-slavery crusade on a political footing. The brutal assault made upon him in Congress, resulting from his insulting phillippics, was one more pivotal event, like John Brown's raids, which emotionally polarized the nation and intensified the inevitability of civil conflict.

Sumner had a large part in the formation of the Republican Party and his published and distributed oration "The Barbarism of Slavery" was a prominent propaganda piece in the campaign of 1860. When the Civil War began he was the first prominent statesman to urge emancipation as a measure to end the war. When the Proclamation was finally issued, no man had done more than him to prepare public sentiment for its approval.* With Republican control of the Senate in 1861, Sumner was made chairman of the powerful foreign relations committee rendering a decade of distinguished service in that post. Forging a close alliance with the administration he successfully suppressed moves in Congress which risked war with Great Britain and France.

Sumner was the earliest progenitor of the extreme doctrine that secession disposed of all rights of the separatist States. A radical Republican, he championed Congressional reconstruction of the South in opposition to the moderate Presidential prescription and probably was the greatest influence in the defeat of Lincoln's proposal. In the Johnson administration he joined with Thaddeus Stevens in the leadership of radical reconstruction intent on securing civil rights for freedmen. He was

*George H. Haynes, "Charles Sumner," Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. XVIII (New York, 1943), pp. 208-214.

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. Significance: (1) Charles Sumner House

prominent in the impeachment of President Andrew Johnson, his indiscriminate invective earning him justified historical criticism.

Biography

Charles Sumner, United States Senator and ardent abolitionist, was born in Boston, Massachusetts, in 1811. His father, Charles Pinckney Sumner, was outspoken in condemning slavery and so earnest an advocate of "equal rights" that he opposed the exclusion of black children from the schools and the law prohibiting interracial marriage.

Unable to secure an appointment to West Point, Sumner entered Harvard College and later Harvard Law School where he became the devoted pupil and friend of Joseph Story. Before beginning his practice, Sumner spent several weeks in Washington attending the Supreme Court, where his friend, Story, was a Justice. Sumner listened to Webster and Clay but, left Washington with a distaste for politics. The routine of law practice bored him so, he went to Europe for nearly three years, where he met many great leaders and learned French, German and Italian.

In 1851, Sumner was elected to the Senate and the aggressive abolitionist vigorously attacked the Fugitive-slave Law. In 1856, during his notable anti-slavery speech, "In Crime against Kansas," he denounced the Kansas-Nebraska Act as "a swindle." A master of the invective, Sumner singled out Senator Butler of South Carolina as one of his special victims. Two days later Butler's nephew, Representative Preston Brooks, attacked Sumner with a cane and severely injured him. It took nearly 3-1/2 years for his recovery but, the Massachusetts legislature re-elected him by an almost unanimous vote.

When Sumner returned to the Senate, he found that southern leaders were more aggressive than ever over slavery in the territories. During the debate for the admission of Kansas as a free state, he attempted to assault slavery on all fronts-social, moral and economic as well as the political aspects. He ignored his Massachusetts constituents and refused to support the Crittenden Compromise. Sumner continually urged emancipation to end the war and highly approved of Lincoln's Proclamation, though he had been impatient at its long delay.

He played an important part in organizing the Republican Party and when they controlled the Senate in 1861, he was made chairman of the "committee on foreign affairs--an assignment worthy of his abilities. In the "Trent Affair he favored releasing the Confederate commissioners, Mason and Slidell. He kept the United States at peace with Britain and France, when war with either of them would have disrupted the Union.

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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

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
Massachusetts	
COUNTY	
Suffolk	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

8. Significance: (2) Charles Sumner House, Boston, Massachusetts

Sumner believed the seceded states had "committed suicide" and therefore lost all rights under the Constitution. Along with Thaddeus Stevens, he held that reconstruction was the function of Congress--not the President. He actively sought President Johnson's impeachment. He hampered negotiations concerning Civil War claims against Britain and strongly denounced President Grant's scheme to annex Santo Domingo, which probably led to his removal from the chairmanship of the foreign affairs committee.

Despite Sumner's devotion to the one cause of "absolute human equality," he was diligent in the routine work of a senator and was respected in his discussions of money and finance, the tariff, postal regulations and copyright. He died of a heart attack March 11, 1874.

GPO 921-724

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Donald, David, Charles Sumner and The Coming of the Civil War, New York; Alfred A. Knopf, 1960.

Haynes, George H., "Charles Sumner," in Dictionary of American Biography, Vol. XVIII, pp. 208-214.

Pierce, Edward L., Memoir and Letters of Charles Sumner, 4 Vols., Boston; Robert Brothers, 1881.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY						OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES					
CORNER	LATITUDE			LONGITUDE				LATITUDE			LONGITUDE	
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"		42°	21'	37"	71°	03"	56 "
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"							
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"							
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"							

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than 1 acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Benjamin Levy, Senior Historian

ORGANIZATION: Division of History, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation, National Park Service

DATE:

STREET AND NUMBER: 1100 L Street, NW

CITY OR TOWN: Washington

STATE: D.C.

CODE:

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☐ State ☐ Local ☐

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

_____

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

_____

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____ (109)

GPO 931-894

SEE INSTRUCTIONS