Form 10-300
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory - Nomination Form

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

1. Name:
   Common: White Horse Tavern
   And/or Historic:

2. Location:
   Street and Number: 26 Marlborough Street
   City or Town: Newport
   State: Rhode Island, 02810

3. Classification
   Category (Check One)
   District
   Site
   Object
   Building
   Structure
   Ownership
   Private
   Both
   Public
   Status
   Occupied
   In Process
   Being Considered
   Accessible to the Public
   Yes
   Restricted
   Unrestricted
   No

   Present Use (Check One or More as Appropriate)
   Agricultural
   Government
   Park
   Transportation
   Comments
   Commercial
   Industrial
   Private Residence
   Other (Specify)
   Education
   Military
   Religious
   Scientific
   Entertainment
   Museum

4. Owner of Property
   Owner's Name:
   The Preservation Society of Newport County
   Street and Number:
   37 Touro Street
   City or Town:
   Newport
   State:
   Rhode Island, 02810
   Code:

5. Location of Legal Description
   Courthouse, Registry of Deeds, etc.
   City Hall
   Street and Number:
   Broadway
   City or Town:
   Newport
   State:
   Rhode Island, 02810
   Code:

6. Representation in Existing Surveys
   Title of Survey:
   Historic American Buildings Survey
   Date of Survey:
   1970-1971
   Depository for Survey Records:
   Library of Congress
   Street and Number:
   Independence Avenue and 1st Street, S. E.,
   City or Town:
   Washington
   State:
   District of Columbia
   Code:
The White Horse Tavern is a large-scale, five-bay-wide, two-and-one-half story clapboarded building capped by a gambrel roof. It is set on a stone foundation, abutting the sidewalk at the corner of Farewell and Marlborough Streets, and faces east. Probably built before 1673 as only a two-room, two-story house with a large pilastered brick chimney, it was expanded across the rear to its present five-room plan before 1750, when it probably also received its present roof-form. The building was further altered after the Revolution.

The centered main entrance on Farewell Street and the side entrance on Marlborough Street are similar in design. Each has a six-panel door surmounted by a transom and enframed by flat pilasters which support an entablature and pediment. The 18th-century windows were altered in the restoration of the 1950's; they now have twelve-over-eight double-hung sash with molded sills and caps. No evidence of the seventeenth-century windows and their proportions has remained. (As presently restored, the size and the shape of the windows have been changed from the narrow nine-over-nine dimensions common to early eighteenth-century Rhode Island building and belong to no style appropriate to this building.) A two-story shingled ell, "salt-box" in form, adjoins the rear at the north-west corner.

Much of the seventeenth-century character of the interior is still intact in the original eastern half of the building. Most of the heavy timber framing throughout this two-room, two-story section is exposed, revealing chamfered summer-beams and girts; and chamfering was applied to the corner-posts in the south-east room on the second floor. Although now encased by paneling, diagonal bracing in the north-west room of the second floor remains in place. The summer-beams in the north-east room on the first floor and in the south-east chamber on the second floor run perpendicular to the fireplace; those in the south-east room and in the north-east chamber run parallel to the fireplace.

Although its exposed pilastered top is a restoration, the original central chimney remains in place, as do brick fireplaces of very large dimensions in each room. The curved walls and coves above are characteristic of early brick fireplace construction in Rhode Island: those in this building are especially good examples. The triple-run winding staircase butted against the chimney in the cramped front hall is a replacement, installed in the 1950's. It is designed with sawn, S-shaped balusters and a closed, panelled string-course.

Opening into the rear of the original south-eastern rooms, a triple-run winding staircase with turned balusters and a panelled string-course; this is an original stair probably dating from the pre-1750 enlargement of the house. The rear rooms added at that time have been altered to accommodate modern restaurant facilities.

(See Continuation Sheet.)
In the 1950's restoration, however, an unfortunate mistake was made in the treatment of the window openings and their sash, changing the size and shape from the narrower 9-over-9 proportions common to early eighteenth-century Rhode Island building. Early photographs show windows of the correct form (which had, of course, in their turn replaced the seventeenth-century windows).
### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Probably built before 1673, the White Horse Tavern is the oldest tavern still in operation in America. Acquired in 1673 by William Mayes, a famous local pirate, it first served as a private residence, but soon became an inn. Mayes himself had been granted a liquor license as early as 1687. The house came afterwards into the Nichols family by marriage, and the sign of the White Horse was first hung by Jonathan Nichols, who owned the tavern in 1730.

The tavern served as a center of local affairs throughout the early years of Newport. The Town Council met here, as did the colony's General Assembly—according to tradition—while Richard Munday's Colony House (1739) was under construction. So important was the tavern's role in public affairs that it was thought that perhaps the Colony House should be built facing it.

The White Horse Tavern is of great architectural significance. Although it was enlarged to its present dimensions in the mid-eighteenth century, its original section is one of the earliest structures preserved in the state. The early interior character of this building has been restored and is well maintained, and the structure still serves the public as a tavern.
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<thead>
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<th>Latitude</th>
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<tr>
<td>SW</td>
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**Approximate Acreage of Nominated Property:** Less than one acre

**List All States and Counties for Properties Overlapping State or County Boundaries**

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Code</th>
<th>County</th>
<th>Code</th>
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</thead>
</table>

**Form Prepared By:**

Antoinette F. Downing, Chairman, Clifford M. Renshaw, III, Consultant

*Organization:* Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

*Address:* State House, 90 Smith Street

**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 [x]
- State [x]
- Local [ ]

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

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date ____________________

**ATTEST:**

Keeper of The National Register

Date ____________________
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. NAME</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>COMMON:</td>
<td>White Horse Tavern</td>
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<tr>
<td>AND/OR HISTORIC:</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. LOCATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>STREET AND NUMBER:</td>
<td>26 Marlborough Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITY OR TOWN:</td>
<td>Newport</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STATE:</td>
<td>Rhode Island</td>
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<thead>
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<th>3. PHOTO REFERENCE</th>
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<tr>
<td>PHOTO CREDIT:</td>
<td>Clifford M. Renshaw, III</td>
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<tr>
<td>DATE OF PHOTO:</td>
<td>1971</td>
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<tr>
<td>NEGRATIVE FILED AT:</td>
<td>Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, State House, 90 Smith Street, Providence, Rhode Island, 02903</td>
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<th>4. IDENTIFICATION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.:</td>
<td>Exterior from the south-east.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1. **NAME**
   - **COMMON:** White Horse Tavern
   - **AND/OR HISTORIC:**

2. **LOCATION**
   - **STREET AND NUMBER:** 26 Marlborough Street
   - **CITY OR TOWN:** Newport
   - **STATE:** Rhode Island
   - **CODE COUNTY:** Newport
   - **CODE:** 005

3. **PHOTO REFERENCE**
   - **PHOTO CREDIT:** John Hopf
   - **DATE OF PHOTO:** C. 1971
   - **NEGATIVE FILED AT:**
     - John Hopf, 10 Red Cross Terrace,
     - Newport, Rhode Island, 02840

4. **DESCRIPTION**
   - Describe view, direction, etc.
   - North-west end of present dining-room in south part of the house, showing stairway pre-dating the house's XVIII-Century enlargement.
GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES
Latitude: 41° 29' 29.26" N
Longitude: 71° 18' 53.72" W
| 1. NAME |  
| COMMON: White Horse Tavern |  
| AND/OR HISTORIC: |  
| 2. LOCATION |  
| STREET AND NUMBER: | 26 Marlborough Street |  
| CITY OR TOWN: | Newport |  
| STATE: | Rhode Island |  
| 3. MAP REFERENCE |  
| SOURCE: U. S. Geological Survey |  
| SCALE: 1:24,000 |  
| DATE: 1957 |  
| 4. REQUIREMENTS |  
| TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS |  
| 1. Property boundaries where required. |  
| 2. North arrow. |  
| 3. Latitude and longitude reference. |