**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:**
   Prackett Charles House

   **AND/OR HISTORIC:**
   Corliss George H. House

2. **LOCATION**

   **STREET AND NUMBER:**
   45, Prospect Street

   **CITY OR TOWN:**
   Providence

   **STATE:**
   Rhode Island

3. **CLASSIFICATION**

   **CATEGORY**
   Check One

   **Ownership**
   Public

   **Status**
   Occupied

4. **OWNER OF PROPERTY**

   **OWNERS NAME:**
   Estate of Charles Brackett and Brown University

   **STREET AND NUMBER:**
   Prospect Street at College Street

   **CITY OR TOWN:**
   Providence

5. **LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

   **COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:**
   Recorder of Deeds, City Hall

   **STREET AND NUMBER:**
   Dorrance Street at Washington Street

   **CITY OR TOWN:**
   Providence

6. **REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

   **TITLE OF SURVEY:**
   College Hill Demonstration Grant Study. Project R. I., D--l.

   **DATE OF SURVEY:**
   1959

   **DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:**
   Providence Redevelopment Agency

   **STREET AND NUMBER:**
   10, Dorrance Street

   **CITY OR TOWN:**
   Providence

   **STATE:**
   Rhode Island

   **CODE:**
   38
**CONDITION**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>CONDITION</th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Deteriorated</th>
<th>Ruins</th>
<th>Unexposed</th>
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**INTEGRITY**

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

The present appearance of the house is entirely its original one. It is, in its main portion, of three full storeys above a low basement, with a corner tower of four full storeys; at the rear is a service wing of two diminished storeys over a basement, through which runs a ramp or tunnel serving as porte-cochère. Attached to a corner of the service wing is a two-storey stable block forming a rear courtyard. The massing of the main house and its projections is asymmetrical, in the "Italian Villa" style, employed monumentally.

Construction is of brick with brown sandstone trim (entrance porch, terrace, window sills and lintels, balconies etc.), cornices and some minor appendages being of wood. The various roof areas are of painted metal and are of hipped form with surmounting balustrades (one hipped area conceals, however, a sizeable roof terrace with observation platforms). Windows are mostly double-hung, 1 over 1 of large plate glass, and are square-headed except for the third storey, where they are segmental-headed.

Interior trim throughout the many rooms is elaborate and varied, displaying moulded and carved wood, marble mantels, a variety of applied wall treatments, of hardware and lighting fixtures. One or two reception rooms "done over" near the turn of the century were in 1929 restored to a correct Victorian appearance.

With the exception of very small areas of damage due to minor leakage or cracks in plaster, the house remains inside and outside in practically pristine condition, having had, ever since its construction and to this moment, the most thorough and careful maintenance and repair.

Considering the date of its construction, c. 1875 ff., the house is perhaps slightly retardataire in its surface design or style, but this seems to have been a definite choice of the owner-architect.
6. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian
- 16th Century
- 18th Century
- 20th Century
- 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATES (If Applicable and Known) 1875-c. 1882

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Aboriginal
- Prehistoric
- Historic
- Agriculture
- Art
- Commerce
- Communications
- Conservation

- Education
- Engineering
- Industry
- Invention
- Architecture
- Literature
- Military
- Music

- Political
- Religion/Philos.
- Science
- Sculpture
- Social/Human.
- Theater
- Transportation

Other (Specify) X

STAMET OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

The permanent significance, importance and interest of this house are spread over several areas—the chief one of which is its place as a remaining example of American XIX Century architectural history and taste. In that respect it is important in New England, and also well beyond it, for there remain anywhere (very few) very formally and monumentally treated durable masonry examples of the "Italian (Tuscan) Villa" style. This large example, upon which expense was not spared, stands intact externally; the interior is also preserved, with its parade of Victorian décor, luxury, equipment and convenience. (The furniture is likely to leave the house, but it is perhaps only incidental to the decorated rooms.) The house will be greatly rewarding to any historian or collegian making a study and even to the travelling sightseer making a passing inspection.

Second, the house by its character, size and particular siting (high on an embankment on an important street-corner) fills a special function as a landscape and cityscape "anchor" to its locale—its adjacent buildings and spaces. These include XVIII and XIX Century residences, a "Gothic" octagonal domed library of Brown University, a modern dormitory complex of the Rhode Island School of Design. It very perceptibly is a cornerstone of its entire surroundings and it defines one boundary of the Brown campus. From more distant points of view it is a towering landmark of Providence's high East Side.

Third is the matter of close association with a personality of note: George Corliss was a figure of genius and importance in the industrialisation and mechanisation of this country. This is the house he planned, designed for himself in his success and prosperity—to include, within the exterior of his choice, all the comfort and convenience of living, all the modern apparatus and devices he could envisage. Though other persons no doubt were asked to handle the more fussy details of interior decoration, the house importantly is the product of both the aesthetic and practical, or mechanical, sides of a great and inventive mind.

Brown University, as designated recipient of this house, hopefully will realize the cultural significance of its possession and will accord it both the sympathetic use and careful maintenance it deserves.
8. Significance.

In addition to producing the over-all architectural design of his house, George Corliss also incorporated into it engineering innovations which reflect the extraordinary inventive character of the owner.

This dwelling stands as a landmark in housing history and improvement, being possibly the first one in America to be warmed by radiant heat, thermostatically controlled: In the stable complex adjoining the house Corliss installed a steam boiler and a small version of his famous steam engine. This engine drove a fan which sent air, through steam-heated ducts, through a tunnel and into the main house. There the heated air was distributed through ducts built into the walls, thus heating all rooms by radiation from their walls. These wall ducts all collected in the attic, from which the air was returned to the stable and re-circulated in order to conserve and re-use any heat which it still contained.

This heating (i.e., the steam engine effecting its distribution) was controlled by a thermostat—surely one of the earliest known—located in the main hall of the house. On the ceiling of this hall and running its full length was a rod of metal alloy which expanded and contracted markedly with changes in the house temperature. Through mechanical linkage, this rod regulated a governor on the engine driving the fan, and this regulated the flow of warmed air to the radiant heating duct-work of the house.

(Besides the above heating arrangements, Corliss made his own designs for other conveniences in his house, such as an hydraulic elevator, concealed sliding insect screens for windows etc.)

Following the death of Corliss's daughter—who evidently understood this remarkable heating system but failed to pass her knowledge on—later heirs and their maintenance contractors could discover no visible heating system at all. They were then accustomed to central heating through conspicuous steam radiators and consequently installed such a system throughout the house. The workmen employed in doing this also did not perceive the older system and so left its elements largely intact, as it still is except for some comparatively recent dismantling and alteration of the stable area.

What Corliss designed for this house was a first-of-its-kind in centrally generated, radiant heating and an unique example of XIX Century inventiveness, direct from the mind of a man who was a monumental personality in the technological progress of that era.

William Slater Allen,
Registered Professional Engineer.


### GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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<th>OR</th>
<th>LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE</th>
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**LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES**

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**FORM PREPARED BY**

**NAME AND TITLE:** Richard B. Harrington

**ORGANIZATION:** Rhode Island State Historical Preservation Commission

**DATE:** Sept. 20, 1969

**STREET AND NUMBER:** 24 Meeting Street, Providence

**STATE:** Rhode Island 38

**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 [ ]
- Local [x]

**Name**

**Title**

**Date**

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

**Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation**

**ATTEST:**

**Keeper of The National Register**

**Date**
1. NAME
COMMON: Brackett (Charles) House
AND/OR HISTORIC: Corliss (George H.) House

2. LOCATION
STREET AND NUMBER: 15, Prospect Street
CITY OR TOWN: Providence
STATE: Rhode Island

3. PHOTO REFERENCE
PHOTO CREDIT: Richard B. Harrington
DATE OF PHOTO: c. 1955
NEGATIVE FILED AT: Richard B. Harrington, 23, James Street, Providence, R.I.

4. IDENTIFICATION
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.
exterior seen from south-west
1. NAME

COMMON: Brackett (Charles) House
AND/OR HISTORIC: Corliss (George H.) House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
145, Prospect Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Providence

STATE:
Rhode Island

CODE COUNTY:
36 Providence

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: Brown University Photographic Laboratory
DATE OF PHOTO: 1961
NEGATIVE FILED AT:
Brown University Photographic Laboratory, Providence, R. I.

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

drawing-room, looking east to music-room
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

1. NAME
   COMMON: Brackett (Charles) House
   AND/OR HISTORIC: Corliss (George H.) House

2. LOCATION
   STREET AND NUMBER:
   145, Prospect Street
   CITY OR TOWN:
   Providence
   STATE:
   Rhode Island
   CODE COUNTY:
   38 Providence

3. PHOTO REFERENCE
   PHOTO CREDIT:
   Brown University Photographic Laboratory.
   DATE OF PHOTO:
   1961
   NEGATIVE FILED AT:
   Brown University Photographic Laboratory, Providence,

4. IDENTIFICATION
   DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.
   first-floor hall, looking east
**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**
**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STATE</th>
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<td>COUNTY</td>
<td>Providence</td>
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<tr>
<td>ENTRY NUMBER</td>
<td>DATE</td>
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1. **NAME**
   - COMMON: Brackett (Charles) House
   - AND/OR HISTORIC: Corliss (George H.) House

2. **LOCATION**
   - STREET AND NUMBER: 15, Prospect Street
   - CITY OR TOWN: Providence
   - STATE: Rhode Island
   - CODE: 38
   - COUNTY: Providence
   - CODE: 007

3. **PHOTO REFERENCE**
   - PHOTO CREDIT: Richard B. Harrington
   - DATE OF PHOTO: c. 1955
   - NEGATIVE FILED AT: Richard B. Harrington, 23, James Street, Providence, R. I.

4. **IDENTIFICATION**
   - DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.
     - exterior seen from north-west
1. NAME
   COMMON: Brackett (Charles) House
   AND/OR HISTORIC: Corliss (George H.) House

2. LOCATION
   STREET AND NUMBER: 4,5, Prospect Street
   CITY OR TOWN: Providence
   STATE: Rhode Island
   CODE: 36
   COUNTY: Providence
   CODE: 007

3. PHOTO REFERENCE
   PHOTO CREDIT: Brown University Photographic Laboratory
   DATE OF PHOTO: 1961
   NEGATIVE FILED AT: Brown University Photographic Laboratory, Providence, R. I.

4. IDENTIFICATION
   DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.
   principal bedroom, looking north
1. **NAME**
   - **COMMON:** Brackett (Charles) House
   - **AND/OR HISTORIC:** Corliss (George H.) House

2. **LOCATION**
   - **STREET AND NUMBER:** 15, Prospect Street
   - **CITY OR TOWN:** Providence
   - **STATE:** Rhode Island
   - **CODE:** 38
   - **COUNTY:** Providence
   - **CODE:** 007

3. **PHOTO REFERENCE**
   - **PHOTO CREDIT:** Brown University Photographic Laboratory
   - **DATE OF PHOTO:** 1961
   - **NEGATIVE FILED AT:** Brown University Photographic Laboratory, Providence, R.I.

4. **IDENTIFICATION**
   - **DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.:** principal bedroom, looking south
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