United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Charles Dowler House
and or common

2. Location

street & number 581 Smith Street

congressional district #2

state Rhode Island code 44 county Providence code 007

3. Classification

Category
district X building(s)
structure site object
Ownership public private both
Public Acquisition N.A. in process
Statue occupied X unoccupied work in progress
Accessible X yes restricted yes: unrestricted no
Present Use agriculture commercial X educational
X entertainment government industrial military

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. and Mrs. John R. Watkins

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Providence City Hall

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Smith Hill, Providence

has this property been determined eligible? yes X no

date June 1980 federal X state county local

depository for survey records Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

150 Benefit Street

state Rhode Island
7. Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Check one</th>
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<tr>
<td>__ excellent</td>
<td>__ deteriorated</td>
<td>__ unaltered</td>
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<tr>
<td>__ good</td>
<td>__ ruins</td>
<td>__ altered</td>
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<td>__ fair</td>
<td>__ unexposed</td>
<td>__ original site</td>
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Dowler House (1872) is an elaborately decked out, asymmetrical, T-plan, mansard-roof cottage prominently sited at the corner of Smith Street and Oakland Avenue. Exterior articulation includes fish-scale slate shingling in the roof, incised detailing on the dormer windows, an oculus window in the mansard over the entrance, a narrow front porch with Corinthian columns in the nook of the "T," prominent bay windows on the facade and west side. Original porch railings have been replaced.

The interior has been somewhat altered, but the principal front rooms remain intact. (See plan.) The four-panel, double-leaf entrance with etched glass gives access to the central stairhall; here, the curving staircase, with a massive newel post, rises to the second floor. To either side of the hall is a parlor. The southeast parlor has a wooden mantel centered on the north wall; its floriated-relief ceiling has an elaborate molded plaster cornice and, in the center, a framed tapestry of cherubs. The southwest parlor has a wide plaster cornice ornamented with floral motifs and high-relief busts of cherubs' heads; in the center of the ceiling is a large, multifoil, gilt panel with bucolic scenes painted in each of the foils. The bedrooms on the northeast side of the house are simply finished, and the kitchen, at the rear of the front stairs, has been recently refinished.
8. Significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</th>
<th>Specific dates</th>
<th>Builder/Architect</th>
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Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The longtime home of local artist Charles Dowler, this house is significant to the history of architecture and art. It is a fine, well-preserved cottage of the early 1870s. Its association with and (presumed) decoration by Dowler are important in and of themselves.

Dowler's house typifies the cottage ornée popular in the 1860s and 1870s. Such elaborate little houses were, as the name suggests, inspired by French examples, notably the fanciful vacation houses built particularly around France's popular summer watering spots on the coast of Normandy. The cottage ornée was predictably popular in Newport during this era, but fewer examples are found in Providence, whose increasingly urban character was less appropriate an atmosphere for such preciosity. Dowler's cottage, located near other, earlier country retreats (most now gone, save for the Bailey and Bradley estates on Eaton Street, both entered on the National Register) was built on land formerly part of the Eaton family's estate, Oaklands. The original rural, wooded setting, long since disappeared, must have amplified the picturesque, holiday-making quality of Dowler's rural residence.

Dowler (1841-1941) was born in Birmingham, England, and came to this country in 1865 as a gunsmith to make munitions for the Union effort in the Civil War. After the war, Dowler turned to sculpture, designing the Collyer Monument in Pawtucket (nominated to the National Register) and the John Sparks Monument in Bristol. He exhibited his work at the Providence Art Club—of which he was a member—in 1880. By the end of the century, Dowler listed himself in Providence directories as a designer of interior and exterior decorations, models for monumental work, and patterns for jewelry. After his retirement in 1919, he took up painting, working in this house until his death. Dowler was part of Providence's thriving late nineteenth-century artistic community, which included a broad range of talent from craftsmen, at one end, to the painters and sculptors at the other, who founded the Art Club and taught at Rhode Island School of Design. Dowler's career is telling—if modest—and his emergence from industry to monumental and decorative sculpture and finally to painting is pertinent to the broad picture of the artist's role in society. Dowler enjoyed some repute among his contemporaries, and his work includes this remarkably intact documentation of his own realization of the artist's cottage.
9. Major Bibliographical References


10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name: Providence

UTM References

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Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification:
The boundary for the Charles Dowler House coincides with that of Providence Tax Assessor's Plat 69, Lot 1. This boundary represents the limit of land historically associated with the property.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>state</th>
<th>code</th>
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</thead>
</table>

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: William McKenzie Woodward, Principal Historic Preservation Planner

organization: R.I. Historical Preservation Comm. date: November 15, 1983

street & number: 150 Benefit Street telephone: 401-277-2678

city or town: Providence state: Rhode Island 02903

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state x local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature: [Signature]

date: January 5, 1984

For NPS use only

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

date:

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration
DOWLER HOUSE
Providence, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger
Date: 1979
Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
150 Benefit Street
Providence, RI

View from the southwest.

Photo #1
DOWLER HOUSE
Providence, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger
Date: 1983
Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
150 Benefit Street
Providence, RI

View: Southeast parlor.

Photo #2
DOWLER HOUSE
Providence, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger
Date: 1983
Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
150 Benefit Street
Providence, RI

View: Southwest parlor.

Photo #3
DOWLER HOUSE
Providence, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger
Date: 1983
Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
150 Benefit Street
Providence, RI

View: Southwest parlor, cornice.

Photo #4
DOWLER HOUSE
Providence, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger
Date: 1983
Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
150 Benefit Street
Providence, RI

View: Southwest parlor, ceiling painting.

Photo #5
DOWLER HOUSE
Providence, Rhode Island

Photographer: Warren Jagger
Date: 1983
Negative filed at: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
150 Benefit Street
Providence, RI

View: Southeast parlor ceiling.

Photo #6