**National Register of Historic Places**

**Inventory - Nomination Form**

*Type all entries - complete applicable sections*

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**1. Name**

**Common:** Carr House

**And/or Historic:** Carr (Dr. George W.) House

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**2. Location**

**Street and Number:** 29 Waterman Street

**City or Town:** Providence

**State:** Rhode Island, 02903

**Code:** RI

**County:** Providence

**Code:** 007

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**3. Classification**

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**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

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**4. Owner of Property**

**Owner's Name:** Rhode Island School of Design

**Street and Number:** 2 College Street

**City or Town:** Providence

**State:** Rhode Island, 02903

**Code:** RI

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**5. Location of Legal Description**

**Courthouse, Registry of Deeds, etc.:**

City Hall

**Street and Number:** Dorrance Street at Washington Street

**City or Town:** Providence

**State:** Rhode Island, 02903

**Code:** RI

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**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

**Title of Survey:** Historic American Buildings Survey

**Date of Survey:** 1959

**Repository 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:** DC

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Carr House, now forming a part of the building complex of the Rhode Island School of Design, was designed about 1885 by Edward I. Nickerson of Providence as a residence for Dr. George W. Carr and is a large, three-and-a-half-storey town house rising upon a constricted corner lot. It is in the "Queen Anne" style and has (or gives the impression in spite of site restrictions) a spreading—-but highly-punctuated—mass, and a high-roofed "picturesque" silhouette. On a steep slope, in a conspicuous location at a busy intersection, only its north and its east elevations are generally to be observed, and these were treated with thought and invention.

Wood-framed (probably of "balloon" construction), the house rises abruptly from the sidewalk upon a basement of finished, coursed ashlar which terminates in the simplest of sloped, angular water-tables. Above, the first storey is covered by irregularly-shaped flat-faced (or split?) fieldstone up to a prominently-projecting wood moulding with a kind of frieze band above it. The second storey is faced by scalloped and plain shingles, and the third storey in the roof displays panelling and half-timbering. Generously-provided bow and oriel windows are sheathed with cast bronze; some railings and roof ornaments are of copper; the roof itself is of slate; and the upper stages of the panelled and hooded chimneys are of brick. The many-windowed west elevation and the south end (a now-exposed party-wall) of the building were not expected to be seen and are faced in unadorned brickwork.

The house is basically a rectangle, though there is a round, four-storey, extinguisher-capped tower inset in its north-east corner, and numerous small protrusions, recesses and tricks of ornament are introduced to deny flat rectangularity. Designed to appear as one large residence, Carr House was actually planned as two separate dwellings (with minimal internal openings between them)—a small southern slice of the structure being intended as a three-storey house for a son or daughter, upon marriage.

The north (Waterman Street) front has the main entrance in its centre, reached by stone steps at one side of an unroofed, stone-parapetted platform before a slightly-recessed double door. To the right of the entrance is a metal-and-plate-glass oriel; at the left are one window and then the rounded, large-windowed base of the tower which turns the corner into Benefit Street. (On the right-hand or north-west corner of the first floor a section of wall has, chamfer-like, been cut out; a column on an angled corbel "interestingly" supports the resulting overhang above.) Having turned along Benefit Street past the tower, one sees a single first-floor window, then two recesses which harbour multi-windowed bows and, as well, the squeezed front doorway to the son's or daughter's narrow house. On the second floor, window openings are numerous and random: here single, there paired, and some in a large bronze-clad oriel over the main entrance. At third-floor level they are even

(See Continuation Sheet 1.)
more "random:" in a gable, in an oriel in a gable, in three types of shed-roofed dormers. The fourth level of the tower detaches itself from the mass of the roof and has round-headed windows nearly encircling it.

Internally, the house still displays its original plan (although in some places there are to-day new openings, or rooms have been sub-divided), and a good part of its trim is in original condition—the latter meaning varnished woods of various kinds in various rooms, exhibiting elaborate joinery, panelling and carving.

From the central, parqueted vestibule in the north front a few steps lead up to the inner double doors which have incised decoration and large glazing. Within is a main hall wainscoted (as is the vestibule) in golden oak. The eight-foot-tall doors of this hall have complex moulded architraves with circle-in-square corner blocks and heavy cornices. The wide and massively-railed stairway is fitted into the south-west corner of the hall and rises in an angular three-quarter turn, with two landings, to the second floor. To its left—on the hall's south wall—are two segmentally-arched alcoves separated by an ornamental pier: one contains a stone and tile fireplace; the other, a door leading to the service portion of the house. A stained-glass skylight, receiving its light through a shaft from the roof, is in the ceiling over the stairwell.

The moderately-sized north-eastern room (probably the reception-room) on the first floor has one curved, windowed corner in the base of the tower. Across this room's south-eastern corner is a tiled fireplace with wooden columns of eclectic style supporting a shallow mantel shelf. A narrow moulded cornice runs around the ceiling. The second room opening from the east side of the hall would seem to have been the dining-room and can be entered through sliding doors from both hall and reception-room. Woodwork in this room is dark-stained, and wainscoting and doors are elaborately panelled; a heavy cornice employs mouldings, panelling and dentils; and the ceiling is beamed. The east wall of the room has a five-section bow window, and the west wall a fireplace treatment contained between floor-to-cornice fluted Doric pilasters. The hearth has back and sides of cast iron with foliate and mask motifs and a surround of small, square, bright tiles bordered by a brass strip; around the tiling runs a wooden moulding which supports a "frieze" panel with relief-carved, Gibbons-like foliage; above this, modillions support a dentilled cornice. The overmantel has complex panelling—the upper range of which has scallop-shell tops—and a heavy shelf across its middle which is supported on consoles. Across the hall, the large north-western room (presumably a drawing- or sitting-room) contains a fireplace with fluted pilasters and large brackets adorning its mantel. Panelling remains under the windows here, and originally a south-western alcove was enframed by a wide key-stoned and dentilled arch. The room filling the south-western portion

(See Continuation Sheet 2.)
7. Description.

of the first floor would seem to have been the kitchen, connecting through pantries with the stair-hall and the dining-room.

The southern slice of Carr House, or the secondary residence, could be reached from the main house through a south door in the dining-room. Here the main floor has a sizeable central stair-hall and three principal rooms. The hall has a corner fireplace with overmantel mirror, and the staircase is almost as ornate as that of the main house. Two of the rooms on this floor have bow windows, and two have tiled fireplaces.

The second and third floors of both portions of the house accommodated numerous bedrooms and have fireplaces placed like those on the first floor. However, these floors are decorated rather sparingly in contrast to the first floor. Door enframements of symmetrical mouldings have corner blocks with mechanically-carved circles in them.

The interiors have been somewhat changed and re-divided, but not ruined. The north-eastern room of the first floor has its woodwork painted, as in much of the rest of the house, excepting the main hall and the dining-room in particular. The western half of the first floor has now openings throughout its entire north-south spaces and serves as a student restaurant-lounge; one of the pantries is now a cork-lined exhibition gallery; rooms of the upper floors serve as studios.

8. Significance.

magnificently-panelled surroundings in giving, somehow, a sense of comfortable domesticity, within a blending of sumptuous materials on a not-grandiose scale.

Edward I. Nickerson, its architect, was trained in the local office of Clifton A. Hall. Nickerson was one of the founders of the Rhode Island Chapter of the American Institute of Architects and served as the chapter president from 1893 to 1895. Carr House is his best-known work here and remains a fine example of the extremely decorative and inventive trend in domestic architecture before the shift to the Classical and Colonial Revivals. Carr House has always provided a strong, memorable architectural image and accent at this busy intersection of Waterman and Benefit Streets. Along historic Benefit Street, it is the only example of its architectural style and thereby, quite literally, a stunning one to visitors. To Providence people, it has long been a landmark.
Carr House is one of Providence's most prominent—and prominently placed—examples of the early "castellated" expressions of the Shingle or "Queen Anne" Style. The influence of the English architect Norman Shaw was infectious in America during the 1870's; and although Carr House was not built until about 1885, its architect employed in an inventive manner many of the elements that Shaw had popularised—an irregular outline achieved by steep roof sections, tall chimneys and overhanging bays; and a diversity of surface treatments and ornamental materials and details. (In time, the term "Nickersonian" became applied locally to this style of Nickerson's works and those of his contemporaries.)

The small, sloping lot on which Carr House is situated dictated the design of a contained, urban structure, and Nickerson responded by emphasising vertical proportions more than he could horizontal ones, and by rendering the ornamentation in a reasonably subdued fashion. One of the finest external features of the house is the use of mouldings, which have become quite thin and elegant, with mediaeval suggestions. The swelling bays and projections of the house allude to an undulating wall, but are somewhat starched, particularly in comparison with works in a similar but freer style by H. H. Richardson and McKim, Mead & White in Newport. The upper storey of Carr House shows an admixture of Stick and Shingle Styles, akin to, but less agreeably resolved than, Richardson's Watts Sherman house of almost ten years earlier. The house, however, exemplifies the spatial and pictorial freedom of the Shingle Style and achieves this intention on a very restricted urban site.

Carr House was purchased in 1916 by the Rhode Island School of Design, which in 1923 began using it as a dormitory. The house had later use as offices in one part, an infirmary in the other. Since 1965 it has housed a security office; and since 1971 the building has also served as space for studios and a restaurant-lounge. The interior has thus been re-handled extensively, and to-day only the entrance hall, the stair, the large eastern dining-room and several of the fireplaces can be considered untouched and architecturally or decoratively significant. These fireplaces are exquisitely coloured and assist their

(See Continuation Sheet 2.)
## MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


Cull, Edwin Emory, A. I. A.: Plans of proposed remodelling of the Dr. G. W. Carr house, 1931 (kept at the Physical Plant Office, Rhode Island School of Design, Providence, Rhode Island).

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## GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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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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<th>STATE:</th>
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**ORGANIZATION:**
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

**NAME AND TITLE:**
B. Christopher Bene, Surveyor-Researcher

**STREET AND NUMBER:**
John Brown House, 52 Power Street

**CITY OR TOWN:**
Providence

**STATE:**
Rhode Island, 02906

---

## FORM PREPARED BY

**NAME AND TITLE:**
B. Christopher Bene, Surveyor-Researcher

**ORGANIZATION:**
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

**DATE:**
May 9, 1972

**STREET AND NUMBER:**
John Brown House, 52 Power Street

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## 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 [x]

**NAME:**

**TITLE:**

**DATE:**

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## NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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:**

---

**SEE INSTRUCTIONS**
Carr House

29 Waterman Street

Providence

Rhode Island

Plan (no scale given) of first floor by Edwin Emory Cull, 1931.
**COMMON:** Carr House

**AND/OR HISTORIC:** Carr (Dr. George W.) House

**LOCATION**

**STREET AND NUMBER:**
29 Waterman Street

**CITY OR TOWN:** Providence

**STATE:** Rhode Island

**DATE OF PHOTO:** 1972

**NEGATIVE FILED AT:** Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, John Brown House, 52 Power Street, Providence, Rhode Island, 02906

**IDENTIFICATION**

**DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.:**
Exterior from the north-east.
**NAME**

- COMMON: Carr House
- AND/OR HISTORIC: Carr (Dr. George W.) House

**LOCATION**

- STREET AND NUMBER: 29 Waterman Street
- CITY OR TOWN: Providence
- STATE: Rhode Island
- CODE: 44
- COUNTY: Providence
- CODE: 007

**PHOTO REFERENCE**

- PHOTO CREDIT: B. Christopher Bene
- DATE OF PHOTO: 1972
- NEGATIVE FILED AT: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, John Brown House, 52 Power Street, Providence, Rhode Island, 02906

**IDENTIFICATION**

- DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.
  - Stair-hall, looking south-west.
### 1. NAME
**COMMON:** Carr House
**AND/OR HISTORIC:** Carr (Dr. George W.) House

### 2. LOCATION
**STREET AND NUMBER:** 29 Waterman Street
**CITY OR TOWN:** Providence
**STATE:** Rhode Island
**CODE:** 441
**COUNTY:** Providence
**CODE:** 007

### 3. PHOTO REFERENCE
**PHOTO CREDIT:** B. Christopher Bene
**DATE OF PHOTO:** 1972
**NEGATIVE FILED AT:** Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, John Brown House, 52 Power Street, Providence, Rhode Island, 02906

### 4. IDENTIFICATION
**DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.:**
Portion of west side of dining-room, showing mantel treatment.
GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES

Latitude: 41° 49' 36.96" N
Longitude: 71° 24' 29.85" W
**1. NAME**

**COMMON:** Carr House

**AND/OR HISTORIC:** Carr (Dr. George W.) House

**2. LOCATION**

**STREET AND NUMBER:** 29 Waterman Street

**CITY OR TOWN:** Providence

**STATE:** Rhode Island

**SOURCE:** U. S. Geological Survey

**SCALE:** 1: 21,000

**DATE:** 1957

**CODE:** 44

**COUNTY:** Providence

**CODE:** 007

**3. MAP REFERENCE**

**4. REQUIREMENTS**

*TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS*

1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.