

Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System

Scanned Record Cover Page

Inventory No:	CON.231
Historic Name:	Brown, Simon House
Common Name:	River Cottage
Address:	49 Liberty St
City/Town:	Concord
Village/Neighborhood:	
Local No:	G7-1325-2
Year Constructed:	c 1845
Architect(s):	French, Daniel Chester
Architectural Style(s):	Gothic Revival
Use(s):	Agricultural; Single Family Dwelling House
Significance:	Agriculture; Architecture
Area(s):	CON.DV: North Bridge - Monument Square Historic District
Designation(s):	Local Historic District (03/05/1973)
Building Materials(s):	Roof: Asphalt Shingle Wall: Wood; Wood Clapboard; Wood Flushboard Foundation: Granite; Stone, Cut



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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Massachusetts Historical Commission
220 Morrissey Boulevard, Boston, Massachusetts 02125
www.sec.state.ma.us/mhc

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FORM B - BUILDING

Assessor's number

USGS Quad

Area(s)

Form Number

Massachusetts Historical Commission
80 Boylston Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

G7-1325-2-1

CONCORD

231

CONCORD

529 A

neighborhood or village)

49 Liberty Street

Name Simon Brown House
"River Cottage"
dwelling

Present dwelling

Original ca. 1845

Construction Keyes/Tolman

Style early Gothic Revival

Form unknown

Architect/Builder

Exterior Material:

dressed granite

Foundation

wood clapboard and flushboard

Wall/Trim

asphalt shingle

Roof

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures

early garage; mid-19th-century

octagonal gazebo

Major Alterations (with dates)

exter. chimney on west--late 19th C.

20th C.: rear wing altered and part removed; one ridge chimney, porch parapet removed. Att. garage added late 20th C.

Condition

good

Moved ☒ no ☐ yes

Date N/A

Acreage

1.04 acres

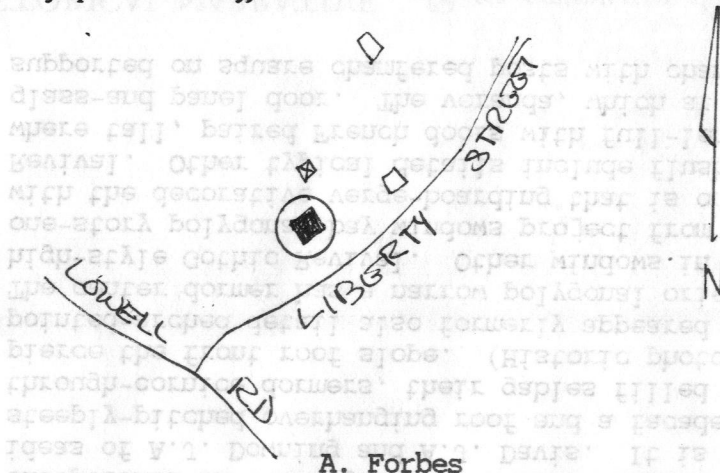
Setting

On rise overlooking river in area of older houses on large lots.

Open yard with mature trees; granite-topped stone retaining wall across front.

Sketch Map

Draw a map of the area indicating properties within it. Number each property for which individual inventory forms have been completed. Label streets including route numbers, if any. Attach a separate sheet if space is not sufficient here. Indicate North.



Recorded by for Concord Hist. Commission

Organization June, 1992

Date (month/day/year)

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION ☒ see continuation sheet

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

This little house is significant as one of Concord's few examples of the early Gothic Revival. Although it is not known who designed the building, it is exceptional in the degree to which it represents the Gothic Revival style and the ideas of A.J. Downing and A.J. Davis. It is a three-bay, 1 1/2-story cottage with a steeply-pitched overhanging roof and a facade-width veranda. Three narrow through-cornice dormers, their gables filled with pointed-arched louvered blinds, pierce the front roof slope. (Historic photos show that the louvered, pointed-arched detail also formerly appeared over the windows of the end walls.) The center dormer has a narrow polygonal oriel window that is typical of the high-style Gothic Revival. Other windows in the house are 6-over-6-sash. A pair of one-story polygonal bay windows project from each end wall. All gables are adorned with the decorative verge-board that is one of the hallmarks of the Gothic Revival. Other typical details include flushboarding at the first story facade, where tall, paired French doors with full-length blinds flank a double-leaf glass-and-panel door. The veranda, which at one time had a roof parapet, is supported on square chamfered posts with chamfered diagonal braces. (Cont.)

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE ☒ see continuation sheet

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Liberty Street, laid out by the town in 1793, received its name in 1854. Paralleling the curves of the Concord River between Lowell Road and Monument Street, this section was flanked by farmland for many generations. It was a fitting location for the home of Simon Brown, (1802-1873), who as editor of The New England Farmer for twenty-five years had a profound influence on the development of American farms and agricultural practices in the second half of the nineteenth century. In 1848 he bought the small farm here with this little cottage, which, according to Keyes, had been built about two years earlier by Andrew Coleman, a paper hanger. (Jarvis, however, says that this was formerly the farm of Abel Brown, a "stone layer" and fisherman, and that he built the house.)

Simon Brown had already established a distinguished career as a printer, publisher, and librarian. He had purchased the Hingham Gazette in Hingham, MA in 1826 at the age of 24, and in 1829 opened a printing office and published the New Hampshire Law Reports in Chester, New Hampshire. He married Ann(e) French of Chester, sister of Judge Henry F. French (see 342 Sudbury Road,) in 1828. In 1830 he and his brother-in-law purchased a printing office in Newport, NH, where they published The New Hampshire Spectator. (Cont.)

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES ☐ see continuation sheet

Maps, atlases: 1852, 1856, ca. 1871, 1875, 1893, 1906.
Keyes/Tolman. "Houses in Concord." 1885; rev. 1915 and 1920's.
Town Directories and tax lists.
Interview with owner, 5/5/92.
Richardson. Concord Chronicle.
Memoirs of Members of the Social Circle, Third Series: "Simon Brown."

☒ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

RECEIVED

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

JUL 15 1993

Community

Property

CONCORDSimon Brown House

MASS. HIST. COMM.

Massachusetts Historical Commission

Area(s) Form No.

80 Boylston Street

Boston, Massachusetts 02116

231

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION, cont.

A frieze screen pierced with quatrefoils contributes a distinctly medieval character to the veranda.

The house formerly had a pair of low ridge chimneys with prominent chimney pots. The pots and the western chimney have been removed, and the eastern chimney raised slightly. One wooden finial remains at the eastern gable peak; below the peak, a louvered lunette appears at attic level. Both features were undoubtedly mirrored on the west gable of the house. Sometime in the late nineteenth century, however, probably in about 1880, their place was taken by the present exterior chimney, built to accommodate a fireplace with mantel that features a plaster frieze of Grecian figures executed by Mrs. Brown's nephew, sculptor Daniel Chester French. (A similar frieze still exists at the fireplace in French's 1879 studio at 324 Sudbury Road.)

In 1864 the house was nearly doubled in size by the addition of a large rear wing (now gone--see below.)

West of the house, a clapboarded, octagonal gazebo/summerhouse standing on a granite base, which appears in early photos of the property, probably dates to the early Gothic Revival period as well. It has 6-over-6-sash windows, a four-panel door, and a wood-shingle roof topped with a wooden finial similar to that on the house.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE, cont.

In 1835 the Browns relocated to Concord, NH, where Mr. Brown established a business as a book and job printer, and by 1837 they were in Washington, where he was a clerk, and then librarian, of the House of Representatives.

In 1848 the family came here to Concord, where Mr. Brown remained for the rest of his life. Here he published The Concord Freeman for about one year, and in 1851 became the editor of The New England Farmer, a post he held until he died. The most influential farm journal in New England, The New England Farmer had a profound effect on the way nineteenth-century farmers worked and lived, and a good deal of that influence was exerted by Simon Brown himself. In the words of his daughter, "His great work was to make the life upon the farm pleasant and attractive to farmers." In fact, not only did the journal deal with agricultural methods, equipment, etc., but also promoted and disseminated ideas about the design of farmhouses and farmsteads, especially those put forth in the 1840's-'50's writings of Andrew Jackson Downing and the designs of architect Alexander Jackson Davis. It remains to be determined whether #49 Liberty Street was built in the form seen today, or if it was renovated by Brown into a Gothic Revival cottage, possibly to a design from one of Downing's books such as The Architecture of Country Houses. In any case, the house, called "River Cottage" by the Browns, is a picture-perfect example of what came to be called the romantic "Downing Cottage." (Cont.)

INVENTORY FORM CONTINUATION SHEET

Community

Property

CONCORDSimon Brown House

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Area(s) Form No.

231

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE, cont.

It is also likely that the gazebo, and a barn built east of the house and later moved to the rear of 91 Liberty Street, are based on Downing models.

In addition to his importance as an editor, Simon Brown was extremely active and influential politically. He held many public offices in his lifetime, and played a primary role in several organizations. He was a strong proponent of farmers' clubs and agricultural fairs, including those in Concord. A founder of the Concord Farmers' Club, he was also instrumental in the organization of the yearly cattle show and agricultural fair. He was a member of the State Board of Agriculture, and like Judge French, took a leading part in the legal confrontation between Concord's river-meadow owners and the Middlesex Canal Co., proprietors of the dam in Billerica which flooded some of the town's prime hay fields along the Concord River. While in New Hampshire he had been Assistant Secretary of State; he also served as Lieutenant-Governor of Massachusetts in the 1850's, and US Representative in 1859-60. Locally, he was a member of the School and Library Committees, and at the First Parish Church, a Deacon and Superintendent of the Sunday school.

The Browns' daughter, Mary, married **George B. Keyes**, and the two families lived here together for many years. In 1864 George Keyes, who by then had apparently taken over the management of the farm, added a "twin" house to the rear of the cottage, effectively doubling its size. A year later he had the cottage at #91 Liberty Street built for the farm foreman, and relocated the two barns on the farm. He also later succeeded in having the town re-align Lowell Road near the farm.

During the Civil War, when his uncle, John S. Keyes, was US Marshal for Massachusetts, George Keyes was appointed deputy marshal, and put in charge of the cargo on captured ships that were brought into Boston harbor. Among the confiscated items were the finely-made books intended to receive the records of the Confederate government. Mr. Keyes presented them to the Social Circle, which used them to record the memoirs of its deceased members.

Among Mr. Keyes' other business ventures were the 1862 organization, with W.H. and Courtland Boynton, of W.H. Boynton & Co., cotton brokers. The firm was dissolved in 1875 after a short-lived attempt to manufacture cotton cloth in Tilton, New Hampshire as the Winnepesaukee Mills. More profitable was his investment in the 1872 extension to Concord of the Middlesex Central Railroad, of which he served as both a director and treasurer. In 1877 he was appointed an inspector in the Boston Custom House, and was later promoted to the position of examiner in the appraiser's office, which he held until his death.

George Keyes, like the rest of the Keyes family, was active in town affairs. He served on both the committee that built the Concord Free Library, and its later Board of Trustees. He was also one of the investors who developed Hubbard Street.

George B. Keyes died in 1893, and the next owner of the farm was George and Mary's son, **George S. Keyes**. He continued to own and farm all the land along this section of Liberty Street east to Estabrook Road and north to #81 Estabrook Road.

Massachusetts Historical Commission
80 Boylston Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02116

Community
CONCORD

CON. 231
Property Address
49 Liberty Street

Area(s)	FormNo.
	231

National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form



Check all that apply:

- ☒ Individually eligible ☐ Eligible only in a historic district
☐ Contributing to a potential historic district ☐ Potential historic district

Criteria: ☒ A ☒ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations: ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Anne McCarthy Forbes

Statement of Significance by _____
The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.

This property meets the criteria for individual listing on the National Register as an extremely well-preserved example of a Gothic Revival cottage, updated on the interior by a mantelpiece embellished with sculpture by Daniel Chester French. It also qualifies as the longtime home of Simon Brown, one-time Lieutenant-Governor of Massachusetts and the highly-influential editor of The New England Farmer. It possesses integrity of location, design, setting, materials, and workmanship, feeling and association.