

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic Bradford-West House

and/or common John Pratt House

2. Location

street & number 402 Cherokee Avenue NA not for publication

city, town Centre NA vicinity of Congressional District 4

state Alabama 35960 code 01 county Cherokee code 019

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Myrtice & Wallace West

street & number 402 Cherokee Avenue

city, town Centre NA vicinity of state Alabama 35960

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cherokee County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Centre state Alabama

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Alabama Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970-present federal state county local

depository for survey records Alabama Historical Commission

city, town Montgomery state Alabama

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Commission

The purpose of this report is to provide information on the historic significance of the property described in the title of this report. The information provided in this report is based on the research conducted by the State Historic Preservation Commission and is not intended to be a substitute for a professional historical or architectural evaluation. The information provided in this report is for informational purposes only and should not be used for any other purpose without the express written consent of the State Historic Preservation Commission.

This report was prepared by the State Historic Preservation Commission and is not intended to be a substitute for a professional historical or architectural evaluation. The information provided in this report is for informational purposes only and should not be used for any other purpose without the express written consent of the State Historic Preservation Commission.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property approx. 2 acres

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UTM References

A

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

B

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet.

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

state NA code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael Bailey

organization Alabama Historical Commission date November 13, 1984

street & number 725 Monroe Street telephone 205 261-3184

city or town Montgomery state Alabama

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state 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 _____

title State Historic Preservation Officer date _____

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

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date _____

Chief of Registration

7. Description

good altered original site

The Bradford-West House located on a large wooded lot in Centre reflects the Carpenter Gothic style popular in the Coosa Valley area dating from the 1850s. Although the house has been altered, its underlying form has been preserved. Evidence suggests that the house had a porch somewhat shorter than present. The roof itself may have had the eaves extended but probably retains its original pitch. Notable features are the full length shuttered windows on each side of the door. The plan itself is traditional although the form has been Gothicized. There are two rooms on either side of a central passage with an ell to the rear. To this has been added various rear additions including a right angle wing at the northeast side of the house and a large addition (c. 1900) at the northwest rear. Two minor additions have also been made to the rear. There was probably an open porch from the main block to the ell which was later enclosed.

Also on the site there are three 19th century board and batten outbuildings including a barn, servants' house, and an ash house.

8. Significance

1800-1899

invention

The Bradford-West/John Pratt House is significant for its association with John Jonathan Pratt, inventor of the "pterotype," a predecessor of the modern typewriter. Pratt lived in the house from 1857 until 1863 when he immigrated to Great Britain to secure a patent on his writing machine. Pratt developed and constructed a working model of the pterotype while living in the house which was rented from Judge Tom Bradford of Centre. Pratt is considered the "grandfather" of the typewriter as his work inspired others to develop and perfect working models of machines that led to the modern typewriter.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

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PAGE 1

Verbal Boundary Description - Bradford-West House

Block 03, Parcel 01, Section 22, T. 10S, R. 9E

Begin NE corner of Intersection of Pratt Street and Cherokee Avenue, SE, 270' along North right of way of Cherokee Avenue to NW right of way to intersection of Cherokee Avenue and Hampton Street, North 560' along west right of way of Hampton Street, West 180', South 180', West 105' to east right of way of Pratt Street, South 330' along right of way to point of beginning.

HISTORICAL SUMMARY

Bradford-West/John Pratt House

John Jonathan Pratt, a native of South Carolina, immigrated to Greenville, Alabama with his parents in the early 1850s. After his admission to the Alabama Bar and his marriage to Julia Porter, daughter of Judge Benjamin F. Porter, Pratt moved to Centre, Alabama in 1857 and opened a law practice. Upon moving to Centre, Pratt rented a small "dog-trot" house from Judge Tom Bradford. Becoming dissatisfied with his practice, Pratt became a school teacher, then a reporter, editor and part owner of the "National Democrat," the first newspaper printed in Centre. From June 1857 thru 1864 Pratt also served as Register in Chancery in Centre.

During this period in 1860 while working with the newspaper and as Register in Chancery, Pratt became determined that because of the large amount of writing involved in the performance of these jobs, that he would develop and build a practical "writing machine" as a way of reducing the time spent in writing by hand. It was in his home, assisted by 17 year old John Neely, a practical mechanic and typesetter, that Pratt began work on the development of the machine. Utilizing a gross of steel knitting needles that were ordered from a Rome, Georgia merchant, Pratt, with Neely fashioning the type from these needles, constructed a working model of a writing machine. (This working model is now in the collection of the Smithsonian Institute.) Pratt began seeking financial backers in both the north and south to invest in the full scale production of his machine but was unsuccessful.

After the beginning of the War Between the States Pratt saw no possibility of obtaining a U.S. patent on the machine. With no other available alternative, Pratt left Centre in 1863 and immigrated to Great Britain to obtain a protective patent for his writing machine. Shortly after his arrival in Britain, Pratt delivered a paper on the pterotype, as it was now known, to the Society of Arts in London. In 1867 after acquiring this patent the previous year, he exhibited the machine to the Society of Arts, the Society of Engineers, and the Royal Society of Great Britain. (This machine is now in the collection of the Victoria and Albert Museum in London.) In 1867 a London magazine "Engineering" published an article on Pratt's machine along with an illustration. On July 6, 1867, "The Scientific American" reprinted this article. While in England Pratt became the first person to produce and market typewriters commercially, by selling several of his machines for \$15 per copy.

It was the article which appeared in Scientific American that inspired the man who has been credited with the invention of the modern typewriter, Christopher A. Shoales, to begin work on his own model of a typewriter. One early biographer states that "if Shoales can be called the 'father of the typewriter,' Pratt may justly be called the grandfather."

Pratt continued his work on perfecting working models and was granted U.S. patents on his machine after his return to the U.S. in 1860 and on an improved model in 1891. Pratt's use of the printing wheel in his typewriters inspired Thomas Edison, who believed Pratt's system was better than Shoales, to patent an electric model of the printing wheel, a forerunner of the ticker tape printer, in 1872.

Pratt subsequently worked as a consultant for the Hammond Typewriter Company, having sold his patent rights to the company, and upon his death in Memphis, Tennessee on June 24, 1905, was buried in Centre.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE 1

1. "John Jonathan Pratt - Typewriter Inventor", Cherokee County Heritage, Vol. V, No. 1, January 1976.
2. Stewart, Mrs. Frank Ross. Cherokee County History, Vol. II, 1836-1956, Centre, AL
3. The Story of the Typewriter, 1873-1923. Herkimer County Historical Society, Herkimer, NY 1923.
4. National Cyclopedia of American Biography, Vol. 3. James T. White & Co., NY 1893.
5. Coosa River News, November 5, 1926. John Neely Obituary.





