

JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: COLTRANE, JOHN HOUSE

Other Name/Site Number:

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: 1511 North 33rd Street

Not for publication: ___

City/Town: Philadelphia

Vicinity: NA

State: PA County: Philadelphia Code: PA101

Zip Code: 19121

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property

Private: X
Public-Local: ___
Public-State: ___
Public-Federal: ___

Category of Property

Building(s): X
District: ___
Site: ___
Structure: ___
Object: ___

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

1

Noncontributing

___ buildings
___ sites
___ structures
___ objects
0 Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register:

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing:

Designated a
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK on

JAN 20, 1999

by the Secretary of the Interior

JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register
- Determined eligible for the National Register
- Determined not eligible for the National Register
- Removed from the National Register
- Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE

LJSDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: DOMESTIC

Sub: Single dwelling

Current: DOMESTIC

Sub: Single dwelling

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19th and 20th century revivals:
Colonial Revival

MATERIALS:

Foundation: Brick

Walls: Brick

Roof: Tile

Other: Pressed metal

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.

The John Coltrane House is a three-story brick rowhouse, built at the turn of the century as a speculative building project in a middle-class neighborhood. It consists of a raised basement, a projecting wood porch on the first story (now enclosed), a three-sided polygonal bay on the second story, and a Palladian window on the third story.¹ A curvilinear Dutch gable caps the building. Although a modest house, only sixteen feet in width, it is notable for its very high degree of historic integrity, both within and without.

The Coltrane House is the best preserved of a row of six units, which consists of two basic facade types: one curvilinear gable with a Palladian window alternating with a flat-roofed unit with a trio of round-arched windows. Although the houses alternate in style, they are part of an interlocking composition, and the pedimented porch of the Coltrane house is shared with 1509 North 33rd street next door.²

The facade is graced by a wealth of eclectic detail. To either side of the entrance there are a pair of Doric columns, of wood, which carry a pedimented porch with central garland. The porch is built of brick and is relieved by a single basement window, under a segmental arch. The brick continues upward to form a porch parapet, which is capped by a limestone coping and which is ornamented by a graceful downward curve. The space of the porch itself has been enclosed and glazed in a mid-twentieth century alteration, presumably by a local carpenter, who reused pieces of Victorian carpentry with grooved and chamfered beams³. At the second story is a three-sided polygonal bay, constructed of pressed metal on wood sheathing. Each facet of the bay is decorated by an ornamental wreath in the metal. The windows are double hung, and preserve their original sash, as do the third-story windows. At the third story the windows are grouped into a Palladian motif and set under a curvilinear gable, behind which the tile-clad roof recedes slightly. Completing the composition are ornamental firebreaks, clad in pressed metal and capped by tiny pediments, which project beyond the cornices of the adjoining rowhouses.

¹ The porch was enclosed some time before Coltrane bought the property, most likely by the Konrad family, the previous owners. The framing and paneling consists of reused Victorian era paneling and framing. Interview with Mary Alexander, October 21, 1996.

² This device of alternating different facade types in a row of houses of identical plans was a characteristic of Philadelphia row house design since the 1880s, when it was refined by architect Willis G. Hale, the city's principal architect of speculative rowhouses. At the turn of the century, the city's rowhouse architects had embraced Hale's techniques: the rhythmic alternation of facade types, the standardization of machine-produced ornamental detail, and a predilection for motifs of the Northern Renaissance. Hale's followers and pupils at this time included Angus Wade, Henry Flower and E. A. Wilson. See Willis G. Hale, *Some Selections from an Architect's Portfolio* (n.d., probably c. 1893), copy at the American Philosophical Society.

³ Mary Alexander, John Coltrane's cousin and subsequent owner of the house, confirms that the porch enclosure preceded Coltrane's purchase of the property. Interview with Mary Alexander, October 21, 1996. Apparently one of the previous owners commissioned the addition, which was built without benefit of a building permit. Records, Department of Licenses and Inspections, City of Philadelphia.

⁴ In plan, the Coltrane House shows a late Victorian open arrangement, with room divisions marked by ceiling arches and implied partitions rather than complete enclosures. It is an excellent example of a plan type that had been perfected in late nineteenth-century Philadelphia. Previously, the presence of a side hall was an absolute requirement for a middle-class rowhouse; in fact, this was the element which distinguished it from the lower-class or working-class "trinity type", which admitted no privacy in the parlor from the entrance vestibule. For this mark of social status, several feet of a parlor's width were sacrificed. By the turn of the century, changes in social mores and planning practice made it possible to omit the side hall, and place an entrance vestibule in a corner of the parlor. This opening up of the plan is one of the hallmarks of late Victorian design.

The first story consists of a parlor, a free-standing stair placed diagonally across from the entrance vestibule, and behind this a dining room; a kitchen and pantry follow to the rear.⁴ The decorative elements throughout are in an excellent state of preservation. In the entrance vestibule are retained the decorative tile floor and walls, although one of the transom lights has lost its leaded glass. The principal features of interest in the living room are the brick fireplace, capped by a vigorously molded wood mantel, and the Colonial Revival stair, with its lathe-turned spindles. The floor is of oak. In the southeastern corner of the living room is a slender, leaded glass window, a rather uncommon feature in Philadelphia rowhouse design, where such windows--made possible by indentation of the rear ell--are generally found in the dining room.

The dining room is also lighted unconventionally. In place of the typical corner window, the dining room is indented from the southern property line to create a slender polygonal bay, lighted by a skylight. A built-in wood cabinet is placed in the northwest corner of the room. All are well-preserved, although the room now bears a modern dropped ceiling. Between dining room and kitchen is a narrow service space, comprising a pantry with built in cupboards and a secondary servants' stair--a distinctive feature of the prosperous middle-class rowhouse. The rear ell contains the kitchen, which is lighted by two side windows. Although it has been successively modernized and altered, it preserves its tile wall. As in much of the rest of the house, the mill work is mass-produced, and shows some of the crudeness of Philadelphia's large turn-of-the-century housing operations, often visible in the sloppiness of the mitered joints of the door surrounds. The rear porch is lightly enclosed in wood, and is used as a utility room.

Above the first story, the house becomes a more conventional sidehall rowhouse plan, with a few unusual features. Across the front of the house is the master bedroom with its bay window, its chief feature being an ornate, built-in cabinet along the north wall, a Colonial Revival composition with a central mirror. (After Coltrane purchased the property this served as his mother's room.) Directly accessible from it is a second, smaller room, square in plan, built to serve as a dressing room or a second bedroom. It is lighted by a corner window, made possible by the contraction of the rear ell. The side hall broadens toward the front of the house, making room for the stair, but in the ell it contracts. This transition is made by the curved wall of the bathroom, the first room in the ell. Behind this is another smaller bedroom, and beyond this the servant stair. The rear of the second story is taken over by another bedroom, entered through a round-arched door with a leaded transom--a door form that is more typically a mid-Victorian feature. This was John Coltrane's own room.⁵

Above the second story, the plan is repeated although with more modest trim. Walls are of plaster, with milled wood baseboards and door surrounds. All rooms retain their original sash and doors, which are in very good condition. During Coltrane's later period of residence, he occupied the entire third story as his own apartment.

The property fronts directly on Fairmount Park. Bounded by North 33rd street and the park to the west, the house rests on a triangular block, with Oxford Avenue to the north, while the chord of the triangle is formed by the tracks of the Pennsylvania railroad.

The park exercised much influence on the development of the property. It was originally part of a vast tract of land owned by Charles Rhoads through much of the nineteenth century. In 1872 a piece of that land was sold to Israel Pemberton.⁶ After the death of Israel and his wife Rebecca, it passed to Clifford Pemberton, who held it

⁵ Interview with Mary Alexander, October 21, 1996. Subsequently Coltrane took the entire third story while Mary Alexander took this room for herself.

⁶ See Philadelphia deeds: 12 N16 32; 12 N16 40; 12 N16 42; and 12 N16 75.

jointly with his real estate associates John Neill and Frank Mauran, Jr., prominent real estate speculators.⁷ Various portions of their holdings were sold off during the 1890s and developed as housing.

The Coltrane House presents with unusual clarity the forces affecting real estate speculation in North Philadelphia. Above all this was a tug of war between the working class factory neighborhood and the socially prominent districts addressing Fairmount Park, both of which influenced the Coltrane House.⁸ On the one hand, North 33rd street was a socially prestigious location, forming the western edge of Fairmount Park. After the park's boundaries were set in 1867, most of the land facing it increased in potential value, and much of it eventually was developed as prestigious housing.⁹ The immediate neighborhood around the Coltrane House became especially attractive after 1884, when a bronze fountain of *Orestes and Pylades*, designed by the prominent German sculptor Carl Steinhilber, was installed at the Columbia Avenue entrance of the park.¹⁰ With the property torn between positive associations with the park, and industrial neighborhood to the rear, Pemberton seems to have hesitated about developing it. As long as its social character was unclear, it would be risky to pitch the house at too high a social character than the neighborhood would bear. While it was more profitable to build large and prestigious houses for the prosperous middle classes, the industrial character of the immediate neighborhood made this strategy a gamble. Rather than building more expensive houses than the market would bear, it might be more profitable to build cheaper houses. Therefore, the Pemberton land was developed somewhat later than the surrounding district, as historical atlases show.¹¹

After 1894 the status of the immediate neighborhood rose when a new entrance to Fairmount Park was opened at the corner of 33rd and Oxford streets.¹² This spurred development across the street; architect W. Frisbey Smith built nine houses that year at the nearby corner of 33rd and Columbia streets, where two years later the East Park Methodist Church would be built, taking its name from the park.¹³ In 1895 Pemberton acquired sole possession of

⁷ Neill and Mauran collaborated professionally and personally as well, even building a paired house together. See George B. Tatum, *Penn's Great Town* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1961).

⁸ Much of this area was developed by speculative builders, such as William Elkins, Peter A. B. Widener and William Singerly, who helped create its character of upwardly mobile, middle-class homeowners. Michael J. Lewis, "He was not a Connoisseur": Peter Widener and His House," *Nineteenth Century* 12, nos. 3 and 4 (1993), pp. 27-36.

⁹ A number of large mansions were built on North 33rd Street around Diamond Street during the 1880s and 1890s. For example, the Albert Dingee House by Diamond Street, designed in 1891 by architect Angus Wade. See Sandra Tatman and Roger Moss, *Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1984).

¹⁰ Fairmount Park Association, *An Account of its Origin and Activities since its Foundation in 1871 ...* (Philadelphia: Fairmount Park Art Association, 1922) p. 42, p. 138. Also see Fairmount Park Association, *Sculpture of a City: Philadelphia's Treasures in Bronze and Stone* (New York: Walker & Co., 1974), p. 148. While the park contributed to the respectable character of the houses on 33rd Street, other factors acted against development of socially fashionable houses. In particular, the presence of the tracks of the Pennsylvania Railroad to the east of the block gave the immediate area a rather industrial character, and directly to the east was a district of breweries, comprising the buildings of the F. A. Poth brewery and the Bergner & Engel brewery. Much of the surrounding land was developed in the course of the 1880s and built densely with two and three-story brick rowhouses. Despite the park to the west, the neighborhood was largely industrial in character, and many of the inhabitants worked in nearby plants, including the Knickerbocker Ice Company at 31st and Columbia streets, and the Bergner & Engel Brewery at 31st and Jefferson streets.

¹¹ *Atlas of the City of Philadelphia* (Philadelphia: G. W. Bromley, 1895).

¹² The engineer for the Fairmount Park Commission, G. Thayer, designed the entrance. *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders Guide* (April 18, 1894). *Fairmount Park Association, An Account of its Origin and Activities since its Foundation in 1871 ...*, p. 42, p. 138.

¹³ *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders Guide* (April 11, 1894) and *Philadelphia Inquirer* (July 9, 1896)

the property from his partners¹⁴. Some time thereafter, by about 1900, he subdivided his parcel and built two blocks of rowhouses. His architect was likely E. Allen Wilson (fl. 1894 - 1936), whom he later used for a 50-house real estate development around 58th and Penridge Streets in West Philadelphia¹⁵. Wilson was an architect-builder who specialized in large-scale housing operations, which maximized social status while minimizing cost, and ultimately brought him a steady stream of commissions from the city's real estate speculators. His great strength was the harnessing of industrial operations in the building process, and the use of mass-produced materials and trim. As was typical of Wilson's work, the 33rd Street houses boasted an array of fanciful pressed metal detail, stained glass and colored tile, although in fact they were rather modest in cost and size, measuring no more than 16 feet in width. His designs achieved a compromise that suited Pemberton's unusual site, houses with the pretense of an exclusive townhouse though built on a rowhouse budget.

Rather than sell his houses, for the first decade or more, Pemberton rented them. Apparently his were not the most prosperous of tenants, and in one instance the intended purchase failed and 1511 North 33rd street reverted to Pemberton.¹⁶ The property was rented to a series of tenants until it was finally sold in 1919 to Karl W. Konrad, a caterer, whose family would remain there for over thirty years.¹⁷

In the course of the next two generations, the composition of the neighborhood changed. The gritty urban texture of the neighborhood to the east came to reach 33rd street, which by the 1920s became denser and more industrial, with the construction of apartment houses and garages. The population also became more predominantly Jewish.¹⁸

¹⁴ Neill and Mauran finally transferred the property to Pemberton on June 10, 1895 (property record 12 N1632).

¹⁵ Tatman and Moss, pp. 862 - 868. The Pemberton Estate buildings at 58th and Penridge Streets were built in 1914.

¹⁶ The property was sold on August 9, 1905 to Blanche de Lery (or Delery), wife of Joseph B. de Lery. The couple lived here for a few years after 1905, after which the property reverted to Pemberton. See Philadelphia City Directories, 1905, 1906.

¹⁷ Konrad died by 1927, when the property was inherited by his widow Caroline (Lena) and daughter Matilda, a bookkeeper. Deed, December 8, 1919, Clifford Pemberton, Jr., and Anita LeRoy to Karl W. Konrad. Property record 12 N16 75. Philadelphia Dept. of Records. Also see Philadelphia City Directories, 1916, 1919, 1923, 1927.

¹⁸ A. Leitvitz built a garage at 1507 North 33rd street in 1920. In the years that followed two apartment houses were built at the nearby corner of 33rd and Columbia, both by Jewish architects working for Jewish clients: the Parkway Apartment

JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 8

National Register of Historic Places

This shift in the pattern of living coincided with another demographic shift, the migration of southern Blacks to northern cities in the 1930s and 1940s. Of course many houses, in the turn of the century neighborhoods in north and west Philadelphia, were owned by aging populations whose children had left. Property had dropped in desirability in comparison with new suburban tracts, and a rapid transformation of these neighborhoods was underway. On July 21, 1952 the property was sold by Matilda Konrad for the sum of \$5,416.00 to John Coltrane, then twenty-six years old.¹⁹

Corporation apartment, designed by Frederick Greisler (1926) and the William Shalita apartment, designed by Charles Caspary (1927-28). Finally, in 1929, architect Isidore W. Levin is reported as having built an apartment house for Samuel Lear at 1521-27 North 33rd. See *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders Guide* (May 12, 1920 and June 26, 1929). For listings of the individual architects, see Tatman and Moss.

¹⁹ Deed, July 21, 1952, Matilda Konrad to John W. Coltrane. Property record 12 N16 75. Philadelphia Dept. of Records. The purchase of the house receives much attention in the standard Coltrane biographies. See Thomas, pp. 51-52; Porter, p. 91.

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Nationally: X Statewide: ___ Locally: ___

Applicable National Register Criteria: A ___ B X C ___ D ___

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A ___ B ___ C ___ D ___ E ___ F ___ G X

NHL Criteria: 1, 2

NHL Criteria Exception: 8

NHL Theme(s): III. Expressing cultural values
2. Visual and performing arts

Areas of Significance: Performing arts, social history

Period(s) of Significance: 1952-1967

Significant Dates:

Significant Person(s): Coltrane, John

Cultural Affiliation:

Architect/Builder: Wilson, E. A. (attributed to)

Historic Context: XXII: Music
C: Jazz

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The house at 1511 North 33rd street, Philadelphia, was the home of the tenor saxophonist and American jazz pioneer John Coltrane (1926-1967) throughout the critical years during which he developed his characteristic musical language. A musician and composer, Coltrane is a principal figure in twentieth-century American music who played a central role in the development of jazz during the 1950s and 1960s. In such albums as *Giant Steps* (1959) and *My Favorite Things* (1960), he took the American jazz tradition as it had developed by the late 1940s with its established forms and harmonies and radically transformed it. HE pioneered modal harmonies and incorporating influences from a variety of international sources.²⁰ At the same time he is--along with Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker--one of the most influential performing soloists in the history of jazz. During the 1950s when the worldwide prestige of American culture was at its height, with the rise of modernism in architecture and abstract expressionism in the pictorial arts, jazz was hailed as America's truly indigenous art form. In this period fell Coltrane's greatest achievement, and he remains a figure of international importance.²¹

John William Coltrane was born on September 23, 1926 in Hamlet, North Carolina.²² When he was two months old his family moved to High Point, North Carolina, where he spent his childhood. He lived with his parents in the house of his maternal grandfather, Reverend William Wilson Blair, a prominent member of the African Methodist Zion Episcopal Church. This family was musically inclined, and at the age of twelve Coltrane joined the band of the church's boy scout troop. First playing alto horn, and then clarinet, he finally settled on the alto saxophone, imitating his model Johnny Hodges, who played with Duke Ellington. Upon graduation from high school in 1943 he moved to Philadelphia, working in a sugar refinery while enrolling at the Ornstein School of Music. He was drafted into the navy in 1945, serving in Hawaii, and returning to Philadelphia upon his discharge in 1946.

Coltrane completed his musical apprenticeship over the next decade through a combination of study and relentless playing.²³ Performing in a series of local rhythm and blues bands, he occasionally toured throughout the country.²⁴ During this period Coltrane met many of the luminaries of post-war American jazz, and developed his own characteristic style, now becoming adept at the tenor saxophone as well. In 1949 he joined Dizzy Gillespie's band, remaining for just over a year. Here he was exposed to more complex music, and particularly the

²⁰ For a modern account of Coltrane's importance, see the Ted Gioia, *The History of Jazz* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). The best modern biography of the musician is Lewis Porter, *John Coltrane: His Life and Music* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan, 1998).

²¹ Coltrane continues to be studied in Britain, France, Germany and Japan. See, for example, Alain Gerber, *Le cas Coltrane* (Marseille: Parentheses, 1985). For a full bibliography, see Porter, pp. 378ff.

²² Besides Porter, useful biographies of Coltrane include Bill Cole, *John Coltrane* (New York: Schirmer, 1976); Eric Nisenson, *Ascension: John Coltrane and His Quest* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993) and J. C. Thomas, *Chasin' the Trane: The Music and Mystique of John Coltrane* (New York: Da Capo, 1976).

²³ Coltrane studied under the GI Bill at the Granoff School of Music, where his teachers were Dennis Sandole in theory and Matthew Rastelli in saxophone. For an interview with Sandole in which he discusses Coltrane's interests in harmonic development, see Thomas, p. 51.

²⁴ Throughout this period, beginning in 1946, Coltrane appeared on numerous recordings as a session player. For an exhaustive discography see Yashuhiro Fujioka, with Lewis Porter and Yoh-Ichi Hamada, *John Coltrane: A Discography and Musical Biography*, Rutgers, State University of New Jersey, Studies in Jazz, no. 20 (Metuchen, New Jersey and London: Scarecrow Press, 1995).

Afro-Cuban percussion of Gillespie's band. It was also around this time that Coltrane was introduced to heroin, quickly becoming a serious addict.²⁵

In early 1952 he bought a house, about fifty years old, at 1511 North 33rd Street in North Philadelphia. This was an area that was then in transition, as rural southern blacks relocated to northern cities, finding work opportunities in such industrial neighborhoods.²⁶ Coltrane moved into the property with his mother, his first cousin Mary Alexander and a childhood friend from North Carolina, James Kinzer; Mary's mother had intended to join them but she died before moving in. The final member of the household was Juanita Austin, known by her nickname Naima, whom Coltrane met in June 1954, and whom he married on October 3, 1955.²⁷ Until the end of his life, he would own the property, using it either as his principal residence or a temporary base during his tours, while his mother and cousin Mary Alexander lived there permanently.

For the next several years, Coltrane traveled with various bands, returning to Philadelphia between tours. His years of obscurity were soon to come to an end. In 1954 he began to play in the band of Johnny Hodges, who had become famous playing alto saxophone for Duke Ellington, and whom Coltrane had emulated as a young musician. His star now rose rapidly. One year later, in September 1955, he joined the band of the jazz innovator Miles Davis (1926-1991).

In time, Coltrane would be revered as the most influential saxophonist of his generation, but when Miles brought him into the band, Coltrane's reputation in the jazz world was modest ... One of the jazz world's most successful late bloomers-his maturing as a major stylist took place, for the most part, during the last twelve years of his life...²⁸

By the end of 1956, Coltrane, because of a falling out with Davis, aggravated by Coltrane's heroine addiction, was fired from the Davis quintet.²⁹

Coltrane's critical year came in 1957, when his mature style first became apparent and when he underwent a profound personal trauma. Apparently the two events were connected. In this year he recorded his first solo album, *Coltrane*, which was released by Prestige Records in May. At the same time he set about overcoming his heroin addiction, an event which took place in his house on North 33rd Street. Here he confined himself to the second story rear bedroom during the peak of the crisis, which seems to have taken place in the spring.³⁰ Besides

²⁵ Porter places the beginning of Coltrane's heroin addiction some time before the fall of 1950 while Thomas suggests it began in 1953. Porter, p. 85; Thomas, pp. 51-52, 63.

²⁶ Russell F. Weigley, ed., *Philadelphia: A Three Hundred Year History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1982); Allan F. Davis and Mark H. Haller, *The Peoples of Philadelphia: A History of Ethnic Groups and Lower-Class Life, 1790-1940* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1973); Theodore Hershberg, *Philadelphia: Work, Space, Family and Group Experience in the Nineteenth Century: Essays Towards an Interdisciplinary History of the City* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981).

²⁷ Naima had a daughter named Antonia who also moved in to the Coltrane house. Porter, pp. 96-99; Thomas, p. 64.

²⁸ Gioia, p. 295.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 296.

³⁰ Presumably this happened before Coltrane's move in the early summer to New York, where he stayed first at the Alvin Hotel and, beginning in late August, in an apartment at 203 W. 103rd Street, where he moved with Naima. Interview with Mary Alexander, October 21, 1996; Thomas, p. 82.

breaking his addiction, Coltrane also renounced alcohol and tobacco, and turned to religion, partly under the influence of his wife, who was a Moslem.

Now Coltrane joined the quartet led by the famed pianist Thelonious Monk, and moved temporarily to New York where they played at the celebrated Five Spot. For the first time Coltrane received attention in the popular press.³¹

The attraction of this combo was as much its star saxophonist as it was Monk himself. John Coltrane was on the verge of establishing himself as the leading tenor saxophonist in jazz at the time he joined Monk's band ... Even at this early point in his career, Coltrane stood out from the pack with his explosive improvisations, his technical prowess, and the unprecedented energy of his performances ... In the final analysis, this was an extraordinary band, one of the most creative units of its day, not because Coltrane served as disciple to Monk, as is so often stated, but because these two masters of the jazz idiom met, for the most part, on equal terms. During their few months together, these two premiere stylists—one espousing a music of pregnant pauses and lingering overtones, the other filling each measure to the fullest, to overflowing, in a music of delirious excess—called to mind the physicists' assertion that the creative energy of the universe is founded, ultimately, on the attraction of opposites.³²

This marked the end of Coltrane's extended musical apprenticeship. At the end of the year Coltrane left Monk to rejoin the band of Miles Davis, which now included the celebrated alto saxophonist Julian "Cannonball" Adderley. The collaboration between this constellation of musicians was unusually fertile and productive, and in short order they radically transformed the nature of modern jazz. At this point there existed a consensus about what a jazz performance involved: a piece would open or close with recognizable phrases of a familiar song, which would then give way to improvisations which would involve variations of the melody against the original harmony, or occasionally new harmonic relationships would be explored underneath the original melody. A succession of soloists would then play, accompanied by certain formulaic rhythmic devices, such as a walking bass pattern, swinging symbols and piano block chords that carried the chord progression. The point tended to be more the personal virtuosity of the soloists rather than the coherence of the piece itself.³³ Such was the jazz movement designated as Bebop.

In place of this, Coltrane and Davis devised a freer jazz, which was based not on conventional chord progressions but rather on a modal accompaniment. To some extent, this modal accompaniment was like the sustained pattern of an Indian raga, which permitted harmonic relationships of much greater scope than in Bebop, which was still based harmonically on traditional Western musical scales. Musical unity was no longer provided by the structure of the original song, but rather through motivic association, the pattern of repeated motifs and phrases, and the overall harmonic coherence of a piece.³⁴ This radical new approach marked the end of the Bebop era and the start of the period of free jazz which has persisted, in large measure, to the present.

³¹ For an early notice see Whitney Balliett, "Hot and Cold," *New Yorker* XXXIII (December 7, 1957), pp. 192-194.

³² Gioia, pp. 245-246.

³³ See Barry Dean Kernfeld, "Adderley, Coltrane and Davis at the Twilight of Bebop: The Search for Musical Coherence (1958-59)," Ph.D. diss., Cornell University, 1981, pp. 177-78; 225ff.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 178; Gioia, pp. 303-308. The most important recording of this collaboration is Miles Davis's *Kind of Blue*, released in 1959 on Columbia Records.

Coltrane remained with Davis until 1959 when he began his independent career and moved to the St. Albans section of Queens.³⁵ In April, following the expiration of his contract with Prestige Records, he signed with Atlantic Records. With Atlantic Records Coltrane immediately recorded the album *Giant Steps*, which was hailed for its pioneering compositions and performances and "as a major landmark in jazz history."³⁶ Coltrane demonstrated his artistic independence from Davis and his spare modal accompaniment by taking his pieces through rapid and difficult chord changes, particularly in the title piece which has since become a standard of the American jazz repertoire. Here Coltrane also began to give play to his own system of chord substitutions, which permitted an enormous expanse of the harmonic possibilities of a piece while still remaining in the original tonality.³⁷ On this album was his composition "Cousin Mary," written for his cousin Mary Alexander who continued to live in his Philadelphia house, and who still lived there in 1998.

In 1960, Coltrane recorded the most influential and popular album of his career, *My Favorite Things*, which remains one of the most important albums in the history of jazz. His fourteen-minute interpretation of the Rogers & Hammerstein standard became an unexpected commercial success, with 50,000 copies sold in the first year. With this triumph, Coltrane's harmonic and structural innovations entered the mainstream of American jazz. In *My Favorite Things* Coltrane showed his increasing musical eclecticism, drawing on Indian, African and Latin American music, among others.³⁸ Perhaps more than any other jazz musician, he was responsible for reorienting American jazz from a reliance on indigenous sources to an awareness of international music. Not only did his thorough training in musicology lead him to explore these sources (as did his increasingly mystic and religious temperament) but his radical transformation of the structure of jazz made it possible for other musicians to expand dramatically their own range of source material.

The next five years mark the summit of Coltrane's achievement and influence. During this period he performed with essentially the same group of musicians, including McCoy Tyner (piano), Jimmy Garrison (bass) and Elvin Jones (drums), a line-up which is generally regarded as the most influential jazz quartet of the decade. When his contract with Atlantic Records lapsed in 1961, he shifted to Impulse Records, where he remained until the end of his life, releasing over 25 albums. Coltrane was at the height of his fame in 1965, and was named "Jazzman of the Year" by the influential jazz magazine *Down Beat*.³⁹

Coltrane's classic period came to an end in that year. He had already separated from his wife during the summer of 1963, returning to live in his Philadelphia house or in hotels. In 1965 he took Alice McLeod as his common-law wife, not only replacing Naima with her, but McCoy Tyner as well, for McLeod was a pianist of some accomplishment herself. Together the couple moved to Dix Hills on Long Island, New York. (Coltrane did not legally divorce Naima until 1966)⁴⁰

During 1965 Coltrane's music moved from the channel he had followed since the late 1950s. Replacing all of his band members except for his bassist, Coltrane began a period of avant garde experimentation, exploring non-traditional saxophone tones and structureless free-form improvisations--drawing on the example of such

³⁵ Thomas, p. 116.

³⁶ David Perry, *Jazz Greats* (London:Phaidon Press Limited, 1996), p. 193.

³⁷ The most detailed analysis of Coltrane's technique of chord substitutions is contained in Porter.

³⁸ Gioia, p. 306

³⁹ Thomas, p. 205.

⁴⁰ Porter, p. 272.

innovators as Ornette Coleman. Coltrane himself was no longer in the forefront of jazz, but this new experimental phase was curtailed by his battle with liver cancer that was identified in late 1966. Coltrane died on July 16, 1967.

Although he died over three decades ago, John Coltrane continues to be of popular and scholarly interest, not only musically but also in terms of racial history. In addition to the biographies of Coltrane that appear with some regularity, one recent book looks at his music as a response to racism in America.⁴¹ Coltrane has also been the subject of doctoral dissertations in musicology.⁴² The Coltrane bibliography continues to grow, and in early 1998 the most definitive biography to date appeared, Lewis Porter's *John Coltrane: His Life and Music*, published in the influential Michigan American Music Series.

The house at 1511 North 33rd Street is the property most closely associated with Coltrane during the productive period of his life, and many of the principal events in his life are connected with it.⁴³ It represents Coltrane's life and social milieu in an exceptionally vivid manner. Since 1952 it has remained virtually unchanged, and has remained in continuous family occupation, owned first by Coltrane, then his mother, and finally by Coltrane's cousin, Mary Alexander, the daughter of his mother's sister Bettie. In recent years, the surrounding neighborhood has fallen on harder economic times, in particular with the collapse of the nearby industrial base. Abandoned buildings and vacant lots blight many of the surrounding streets, and many of the houses are in dilapidated condition. The adjacent park has also been affected, and the statue of *Orestes* at the entrance has been mutilated. Nonetheless, the Coltrane house and its adjacent property at 1509 North 33rd Street, where the John Coltrane Association is housed, form an important nucleus of stability in the neighborhood.⁴⁴

The Coltrane House is intimately connected with the life of one of the most significant figures in American music of the twentieth century. "Whether it was the striving tenor solos on the *Milestones LP*, the majestic soprano work on *My Favorite Things* or the delicate, sinuous minimalism of *Expression*, Coltrane at his best could match the finest jazz ever played."⁴⁵

⁴¹ Karlton E. Hester, *ne Melodic and Polyrhythmic Development of John Coltrane's Spontaneous Composition in a Racist Society* (Lewiston: E. Mellen Press, 1997).

⁴² See Kernfeld, *op. cit.*

⁴³ Two other properties are associated with Coltrane: his birthplace in Hamlet, North Carolina and his childhood home in High Point, North Carolina, both of which are designated with historic markers. See the illustrations in Porter, facing p. 174.

⁴⁴ The Coltrane House has been certified by the Philadelphia City Historic Commission. See Randall Baron, City Historic Certification of John Coltrane House (1985), Philadelphia City Historic Commission.

⁴⁵ David Perry, *Jazz Greats* (London:Phaidon Press Limited, 1996), p. 198.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 16

National Register of Historic Places

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
 Previously Listed in the National Register.
 Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
 Designated a National Historic Landmark. Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: # _____
 Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State Agency
 Federal Agency
 Local Government
 University
 Other (Specify Repository): _____

JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: less than 1 acre

UTM References:	Zone Northing	Easting
	A <u>18</u> 4425380	483850

Verbal Boundary Description:

The John Coltrane property is situated on the east side of 33rd Street at a distance of 277 feet 3 inches southward from the south side of Oxford street in the 29th ward of the city of Philadelphia, containing in front or breadth on said 33rd Street 16 feet and extending of that width in length or depth eastward between parallel lines at right angles with said 33rd Street on the north line thereof 157 feet and three inches and on the south line thereof 143 feet seven inches to a certain four foot wide alley leading northeastward into Natrona Street, and containing at the rear end thereof along said alley 21 feet and one half inch.

Boundary Justification:

Encompasses the boundaries of the historic property purchased by John Coltrane in 1952.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title:	Michael J. Lewis, Ph.D.
Org.:	Williams College
Street/#:	Lawrence Hall
City/Town:	Williamstown
State:	Massachusetts
ZIP:	01267
Telephone:	(413) 597-3932
Date:	7/5/98



JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
View of street scape
Photo by Ralph Lieberman, 1996



GARDEN

CASH &

CARRY

1521

JOHN COLTRANE

JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE. 1511 NORTH 33rd ST, PHILA., PA.
LIVING ROOM, LOOKING NORTHEAST, 1996. Photo: Ralph Lieberman



JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Front Facade
Photo by Ralph Lieberman, 1996



JOHN W. COLTRANE
1926-1967
A promising African
American jazz saxophone
composer, musician,
bandleader and African
and Indian dancer. He
was a pioneer in jazz
which at that time had
not yet been widely
accepted and is widely
regarded as one of the
greatest jazz musicians
of all time. 1967-1968

**JOHN
COLTRANE**
CULTURAL SOCIETY

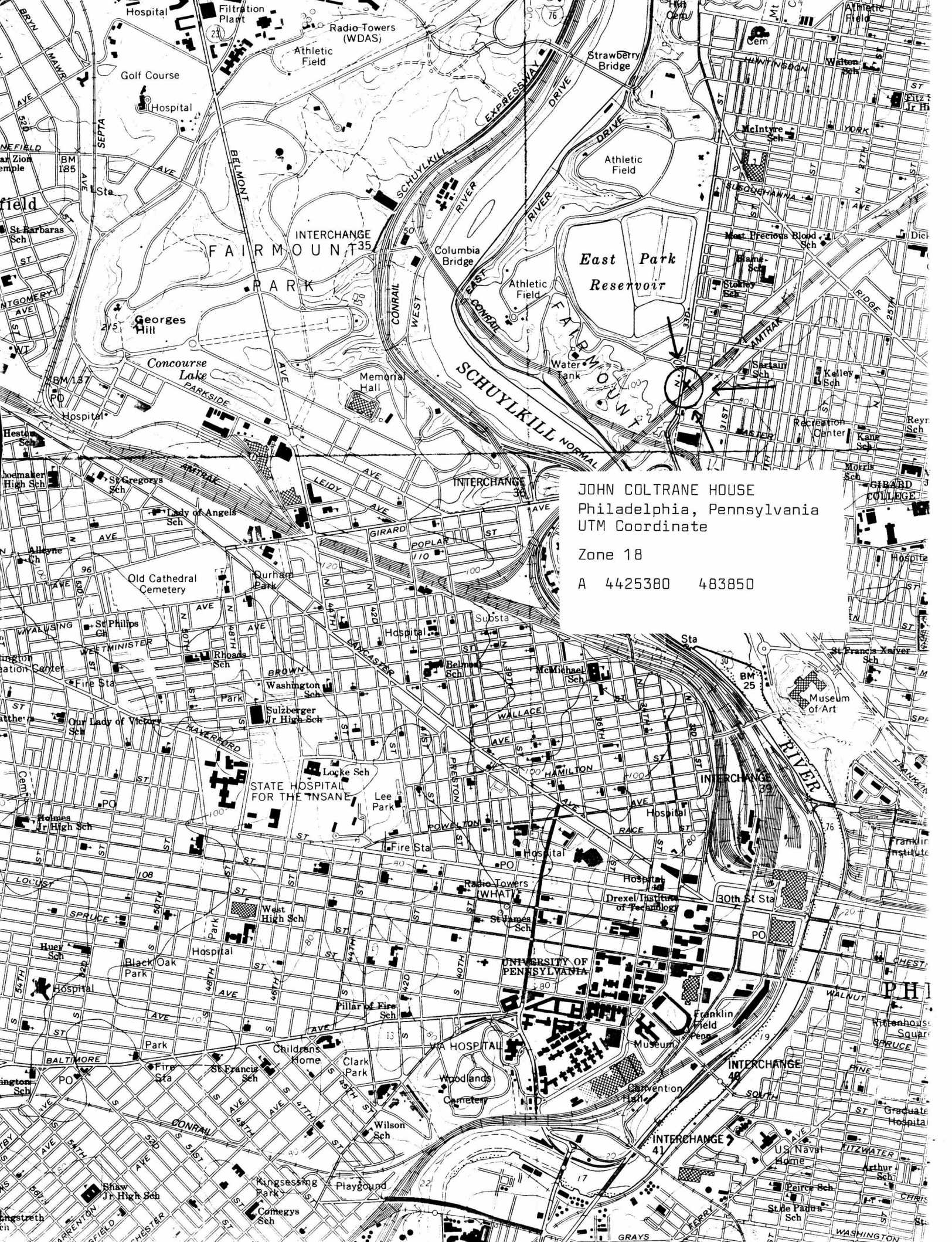
JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE, 1511 NORTH 33rd ST., PHILA.
FACADE, LOOKING EAST. 1996. Photo: Ralph Lieberman.



JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Living Room
Photo by Ralph Lieberman, 1996



JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE. 1511 NORTH 33rd ST, PHILA., PA.
LIVING ROOM, LOOKING NORTHEAST, 1996. Photo: Ralph Lieberman



JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
UTM Coordinate

Zone 18
A 4425380 483850

Author: Bill Bolger at NP-MARO
Date: 8/3/98 4:41 PM
Priority: Normal
TO: Carol Shull at NP-WASO-NRHE
CC: Bonnie Halda
CC: Carolyn Pitts
Subject: John Coltrane NHL

----- Message Contents -----

Carol,

We wish to request that the John Coltrane House NHL Nomination be scheduled for the October review by the History Areas Committee. The nomination was prepared by the Preservation Alliance of Philadelphia and was only recently received. Scheduling the review for October will necessitate a waiver of the notification period. We would very much appreciate allowing the waiver as there is a lot of local interest in this application and it has been a long time coming. I have been in touch with the owner of the property (John Coltrane's cousin, Mary Alexander) and I know that she will be pleased to see the notification waived.

Please let us know if there is anything else we can do to assist.

Bill Bolger

Author: Bill Bolger at NP-MARO
Date: 9/23/98 11:00 AM
Priority: Urgent
CC: Carolyn Pitts
TO: Patty Henry at NP-WASO-NRHE
Subject: Re: John Coltrane nomination

----- Message Contents -----

The phone number that I have for Coltrane is:

John Coltrane Cultural Society 763-1118

I think that this is Mary's number at the house.

This reminds me that we need to have an owner info cover sheet filled out on each NHL that includes all of this info. When we get the nominations here in the region we need to develop this info for our NHL Stewards program. The cover sheet could also have a brief space for noting any random information about the site's management that was gathered in the process of nominating. Can we talk about this with Carol?

Yo, Carolyn! Hows 12:30 for lunch?

bb

Reply Separator

Subject: John Coltrane nomination
Author: Patty Henry at NP-WASO-NRHE
Date: 9/23/98 9:28 AM

Hi Bill (and Carolyn)! One thing I forgot to ask that we need is Mary Alexander's phone number. We are going to Fed Ex her letter and waiver and copy of the nomination and as you know, our experience is that Fed Ex will not accept it unless we have a phone number. (Not to mention the tough gate keeper of Denise Mayo - Carolyn will understand and can explain it to you, Bill). I've copied Carolyn just in case Bill is out or is busy today. We will be doing the Fed Ex tomorrow if all goes as planned so I will need this by tomorrow morning.

As an aside, Carolyn, the book will go out today to have the slides made and we are telling Bara King that we need then no later than next Friday.

Thanks again. Talk to you soon.

Patty

PH 2 9/24/98

H34(2280)

SEP 24 1998

Ms. Mary Alexander
1511 North 33rd Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19121

Dear Ms. Alexander:

We have been requested to include the John Coltrane House, located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the current group of properties being considered for National Historic Landmark designation. In order for this property to be considered for National Historic Landmark designation at the next meeting of the National Park System Advisory Board, it is necessary for us to ask whether you will waive your right to a 60-day period for commenting on the Landmark nomination of the property, as explained below.

We wish to expedite this matter, and to invite you to comment on it even if you should choose to waive your right to the full 60-day comment period normally provided under the Landmarks Program regulations. A study nominating the property for National Historic Landmark designation has been prepared, and a copy of it is enclosed. Should you wish to comment on the study, we ask that you do so speedily, so that the National Park System Advisory Board may have the benefit of your comments at its upcoming meeting. The time and location of the meeting are indicated on the enclosure.

The National Historic Landmarks Program recognizes properties of national significance in the Nation's history, architecture, archeology, and culture. The owners may apply for a single bronze plaque. National Historic Landmark designation follows three steps: study and preparation of a nomination; review of the nomination by the National Park System Advisory Board; and a decision by the Secretary of the Interior on the Board's recommendations.

National Historic Landmarks Program regulations provide that certain parties shall receive notice of our preparation of a Landmark study and of the National Park System Advisory Board meeting at which the Board will consider that study. The notified parties ordinarily have 60 days before the Board meeting to submit their views in writing if they so desire. However, the regulations also provide for waiving of that full 60-day commenting period, when all property owners and the chief elected local official have agreed in writing to a waiver.

Because of the need for timely action, we ask that you waive the commenting period, if you so desire, by signing and dating the enclosed waiver, and returning the waiver to me by **October 5, 1998**, at the address on the waiver. Only your waiver of your right to the full notice period will permit the Board to consider this Landmark nomination at the next Board meeting.

We thank you for your attention to this matter, and we hope to receive your waiver soon. If we receive your waiver by the requested date, the National Park System Advisory Board National Landmarks Committee will review the study. Subsequently, they will recommend Landmark designation to the full Advisory Board if they believe that the property meets the criteria for designation of the National Historic Landmarks Program. We will then inform the Secretary of the Interior of the Board's recommendation for his decision.

To assist you in considering this matter, we have enclosed a copy of the regulations that govern the National Historic Landmarks Program. They describe the criteria for designation (Sec. 65.4), and include other information on the Program. We are also enclosing a fact sheet that outlines the effects of designation.

Sincerely,

(Sgd) Carol D. Shull

Carol D. Shull
Chief, National Historic Landmarks Survey
Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places

Enclosures

As owner of the John Coltrane House, I hereby waive the right to a 60-day period for considering the nomination of the John Coltrane House for designation as a National Historic Landmark.

Please check one of the boxes below:

I wish to comment as follows:

I do not wish to comment.

Signed,

Ms. Mary Alexander

Please return this waiver to Carol D. Shull, Chief, National Historic Landmarks Survey, Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., NC 400, Washington, D.C. 20240., no later than COB, October 5, 1998.

**PROPERTY STUDIED FOR
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION**

**JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA**

The Landmarks Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board will evaluate this property at a meeting to be held on Wednesday, October 7, 1998, beginning at 9:00 a.m. in the First Floor Hearing Room, 800 North Capitol Street, NW, Washington, DC. The Landmarks Committee evaluates the studies of historic properties being nominated for National Historic Landmark designation in order to advise the full National Park System Advisory Board at their meeting on Tuesday, October 20, 1998, in New Orleans, Louisiana, and will recommend to the full Board those properties that the Committee finds meet the criteria of the National Historic Landmarks Program.

Owners of private properties nominated for NHL designation have an opportunity to concur with or object to listing in accord with the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 65. Any owner or partial owner of private property who chooses to object to designation must submit a notarized statement certifying that the party is the sole or partial owner of the private property and objects to the designation. Each owner or partial owner of private property has one vote regardless of the portion of the property that the party owns. If a majority of private property owners object, a property will not be designated. Letters objecting to or supporting nominations may be sent to Ms. Carol D. Shull, Chief, National Historic Landmarks Survey, at the National Park Service, National Register, History and Education, 1849 C Street, N.W., NC 400, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Should you wish to obtain information about these meetings, or about the National Historic Landmarks Program, please contact Historian Patty Henry at the National Park Service, National Register, History and Education, 1849 C Street, N.W., NC 400, Washington, D.C. 20240; or by telephone at 202/343-8163.

WAIVER LETTER SENT TO:

OWN: Ms. Mary Alexander
1511 North 33rd Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19121

HEO: Honorable Edward Rendell
Mayor of Philadelphia
215 City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

NON-WAIVER SENT TO:

SHPO: Dr. Brent D. Glass, SHPO
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
P.O. Box 1026
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17108-1026

cc: Mr. Randall Cotton
Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
1616 Walnut Street, Suite 2310
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103

bcc: B. Bolger, PSO
C. Pitts, PSO
0001 Stanton
2200 Stevenson
2280 Henry
2280 JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE (NHL PENDING)

FNP:PHenry:mg:9/23/98
F:\NR-NHL\MONETTE\FALL98\COLTOWN.WAV

PH 9/28/98
Shaw
9-28-98
Greenberg
9-29-98

SEP 29 1998

H34(2280)

Honorable Arlen Specter
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Specter:

We have been requested to include the John Coltrane House, located in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in the current group of properties being considered for National Historic Landmark designation. The timing of this special request has made it necessary for us to ask that the owners of the property and the Mayor of Philadelphia waive their right to a 60-day period for commenting on the Landmark nomination of the property, as explained below.

We wish to expedite this matter, and to inform you of this special request. We invite your comment on the matter. A study nominating the property for National Historic Landmark designation has been prepared, and a copy of it is enclosed. Should you wish to comment on the study, we ask that you do so speedily, so that the National Park System Advisory Board may have the benefit of your comments at its upcoming meeting. The time and location of the meeting are indicated on the enclosure.

The National Historic Landmarks Program recognizes properties of national significance in the Nation's history, architecture, archeology, and culture. The owners may apply for a bronze plaque. National Historic Landmark designation follows three steps: study and preparation of a nomination; review of the nomination by the National Park System Advisory Board; and a decision by the Secretary of the Interior on the Board's recommendations.

National Historic Landmarks Program regulations provide that certain parties shall receive notice of our preparation of a Landmark study and of the National Park System Advisory Board meeting at which the Board will consider that study. The notified parties ordinarily have 60 days before the Board meeting to submit their views in writing if they so desire. However, the regulations also provide for waiving of that full 60-day commenting period, when all property owners and the chief elected local official have agreed in writing to a waiver.

If we receive the required waivers by **October 5, 1998**, the National Park System Advisory Board National Landmarks Committee will review the study. Subsequently, they will recommend Landmark designation to the full Advisory Board if they believe that the property meets the criteria for designation of the National Historic Landmarks Program. We will then inform the Secretary of the Interior of the Board's recommendation for his decision.

To assist you in considering this matter, we have enclosed a copy of the regulations that govern the National Historic Landmarks Program. They describe the criteria for designation (Sec. 65.4), and include other information on the Program. We are also enclosing a fact sheet that outlines the effects of designation.

Sincerely,

/s/ Ronald M. Greenberg

Katherine H. Stevenson
Associate Director, Cultural Resource
Stewardship and Partnerships

Enclosures

**PROPERTY STUDIED FOR
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK DESIGNATION**

**JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA**

The Landmarks Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board will evaluate this property at a meeting to be held on Wednesday, October 7, 1998, beginning at 9:00 a.m. in the First Floor Hearing Room, 800 North Capitol Street, NW, Washington, DC. The Landmarks Committee evaluates the studies of historic properties being nominated for National Historic Landmark designation in order to advise the full National Park System Advisory Board at their meeting on Tuesday, October 20, 1998, in New Orleans, Louisiana, and will recommend to the full Board those properties that the Committee finds meet the criteria of the National Historic Landmarks Program.

Owners of private properties nominated for NHL designation have an opportunity to concur with or object to listing in accord with the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 65. Any owner or partial owner of private property who chooses to object to designation must submit a notarized statement certifying that the party is the sole or partial owner of the private property and objects to the designation. Each owner or partial owner of private property has one vote regardless of the portion of the property that the party owns. If a majority of private property owners object, a property will not be designated. Letters objecting to or supporting nominations may be sent to Ms. Carol D. Shull, Chief, National Historic Landmarks Survey, at the National Park Service, National Register, History and Education, 1849 C Street, N.W., NC 400, Washington, D.C. 20240.

Should you wish to obtain information about these meetings, or about the National Historic Landmarks Program, please contact Historian Patty Henry at the National Park Service, National Register, History and Education, 1849 C Street, N.W., NC 400, Washington, D.C. 20240; or by telephone at 202/343-8163.

IDENTICAL LETTERS SENT TO:

Honorable Arlen Specter
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

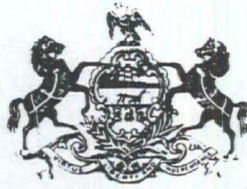
Honorable Rick Santorum
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Chaka Fattah
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

bcc: B. Bolger, PSO
C. Pitts. PSO
0001 Stanton
2200 Stevenson
2280 Henry
2280 JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE (NHL PENDING)
2605 CCU

FNP:PHenry:mg:9/24/98

F:\NR-NHL\MONETTE\FALL98\COLTCONWAV



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION
P.O. BOX 1026, HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17108-1026



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

September 30, 1998

Carol D. Shull
Chief, National Historic Landmarks Survey
NPS, National Register, History & Education
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Ms Shull:

Three important Pennsylvania properties will be considered by the Landmarks Committee of the National Park System Advisory Board at its October 7, 1998 meeting: the Moland House in Bucks County, the Friends' Hospital in Philadelphia, and the **John Coltrane House** in Philadelphia.

Pennsylvanians have long been aware of the importance of the Moland House. General George Washington used this house as his headquarters during the Neshaminy encampment, which was one of the largest Continental Army encampments. It was here that Washington waited for news of British maneuvers against the city of Philadelphia and where the Americans planned their strategies for the defense of the city. At the Moland House Washington also met for the first time the professional foreign soldiers, the Count Pulaski and the Marquis de Lafayette, who served the American cause with great valor. Given the sensitivity of the American troops and Congress to possible foreign adventurers seeking to exploit the American cause, and given the fragility of Franco-American relations at the time, the strong relationships forged by that initial meeting were critical in building American acceptance and trust of foreign military officers. The people who used the Moland House and the issues they contended with make it of paramount importance in the evolving Revolutionary War campaign.

America began its journey along the long path of modernizing mental health care with the establishment of the Friends' Hospital in Philadelphia and the hospital has been since its inception a model for national and international patient care. The innovative and compassionate policies of the Friends' Hospital are evident in its physical site plan, its methodology of treatment, and staffing practices. The landscape design of the grounds, historic plantings, and rare specimens reflect the hospital's pioneering work with horticulture as a therapeutic tool. Breaking with harsh contemporary practices the hospital continuously developed therapies that merged medical knowledge with treatment aimed at strengthening the mental health of patients. And the Friends' Hospital was among the first to accept women physicians to its staff as well as to create professional training programs in mental health.

As John Coltrane's home during the critical years during which he developed his characteristic musical language, the significance of the John Coltrane House is unquestionable. Coltrane

bought this house when he was just beginning his musical apprenticeship and partnership with the leading figures in postwar American jazz. His residence here spanned the years in which he experimented with musical styles and techniques, resulting in the signature style of spontaneous composition that has made him one of the most influential saxophonists in American musical history.

I am pleased to support the NHL designation for these significant national resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brent D. Glass". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "B" and "G".

BRENT D. GLASS

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

FACSIMILE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

TO: Carol Shull FROM: R. Tyler

FAX NUMBER: 202-343-1244 DATE: 30 Sept. 1998

PHONE NUMBER:

TOTAL NO. OF PAGES INCLUDING COVER: 4

RE: Mayor's waiver for Coltrane House

- URGENT
- FOR REVIEW
- PLEASE COMMENT
- PLEASE REPLY

COMMENTS:

Hard copy has been posted to you by U.S. Express Mail.

As Mayor of Philadelphia, I hereby waive the right to a 60-day period for considering the nomination of the John Coltrane House for designation as a National Historic Landmark.

Please check one of the boxes below:

I wish to comment as follows:

I do not wish to comment.

Signed,

Edward G Rendell

Honorable Edward Rendell, Mayor of Philadelphia

Please return this waiver to Carol D. Shull, Chief, National Historic Landmarks Survey, Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., NC 400, Washington, D.C. 20240., no later than COB, October 5, 1998.

facsimile
TRANSMITTAL

to: Carol Shull
fax #: 202-343-1244
re: Coltrane Owner's Waiver
date: September 30, 1998
pages: 2, including this cover sheet.

Attached is a copy of the owner's waiver for the John Coltrane House NHL nomination. Dick Tyler at the Philadelphia Historical Commission informed me today that the waiver from the mayor was signed and mailed over night express mail and that a fax was sent to you at this number. Let me know if you need anything else.

Bill B

From the desk of...

William C. Bolger
National Historic Landmarks Program Manager
National Park Service
U S Custom House Room 370
Philadelphia, Pa. 19106

215-597-1578
Fax: 215-597-0932

As owner of the John Coltrane House, I hereby waive the right to a 60-day period for considering the nomination of the John Coltrane House for designation as a National Historic Landmark.

Please check one of the boxes below:

I wish to comment as follows:

I do not wish to comment.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Mary L. Alexander".

Ms. Mary Alexander

Please return this waiver to Carol D. Shull, Chief, National Historic Landmarks Survey, Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 1849 C Street, N.W., NC 400, Washington, D.C. 20240., no later than COB, October 5, 1998.

CHAKA FATTAH
2ND DISTRICT, PENNSYLVANIA

WASHINGTON OFFICE:
1205 LONGWORTH HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4001

DISTRICT OFFICES:
4104 WALNUT STREET
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19104
(215) 387-6404
6632 GERMANTOWN AVENUE
PHILADELPHIA, PA 19119
(215) 848-9386



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

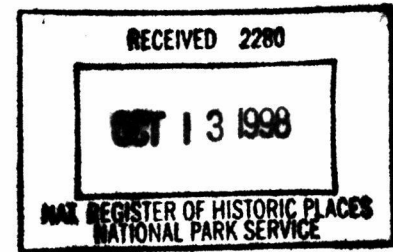
COMMITTEES:
COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND THE WORKFORCE
POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION, TRAINING AND
LIFE-LONG LEARNING SUBCOMMITTEE
EMPLOYER/EMPLOYEE RELATIONS SUBCOMMITTEE

GOVERNMENT REFORM
AND OVERSIGHT
POSTAL SERVICE SUBCOMMITTEE
RANKING MEMBER
NATIONAL ECONOMIC GROWTH,
NATURAL RESOURCES, AND
REGULATORY AFFAIRS
SUBCOMMITTEE

COMMITTEE ON STANDARDS OF
OFFICIAL CONDUCT

October 8, 1998

Ms. Carol D. Shull
Chief, Natl Historic Landmarks
National Park Service
National Register, History and Education
1849 C Street, N.W., NC 400
Washington, D.C. 20240



Dear Ms. Shull:

I am writing to support the designation of the John W. Coltrane house, located at 1511 North 33rd Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, as a National Historic Landmark.

Jazz is the only true American art form; we have the responsibility and the duty to preserve it for future generations. Having this special place, where John Coltrane lived and worked, preserved made available to musicians, historians and young people who had no opportunity to hear him in person, will strengthen the ties to our national musical heritage.

The John W. Coltrane Cultural Society in Philadelphia has a strong commitment to preserving this landmark and enriching our cultural legacy by helping Philadelphians and all Americans to remember and appreciate the unique and special contributions made by John Coltrane.

I fully support the efforts for National Historic Landmark designation of the John Coltrane House.

Very truly yours,

Chaka Fattah
Member of Congress

CF:ns



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

H3415(418)

NOV 16 1998

MEMORANDUM

To: Secretary *[Signature]* DEC 7 1998
Through: Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks
From: Director *[Signature]*
Subject: Designation of 15 Properties as National Historic Landmarks: Request for Secretarial Action

At a meeting on October 20, 1998, the National Park System Advisory Board recommended designation of the following 15 properties as National Historic Landmarks:

ARCHITECTURE

1. **BOSTON AVENUE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH**, TULSA, OKLAHOMA
2. **F. F. TOMER HOUSE**, RIVERSIDE, ILLINOIS
3. **GUTHRIE HISTORIC DISTRICT**, GUTHRIE, OKLAHOMA
4. **SYMPHONY HALL**, BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

MARITIME THEME STUDY

5. **GROSSE POINT LIGHT STATION**, EVANSTON, ILLINOIS
6. **THOMAS POINT SHOAL LIGHT STATION**, ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY, MARYLAND

INDIVIDUAL TOPICS

7. **JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE**, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA
8. **CHIEF PLENTY COUPS (Alek-Chea-Ahoosh) HOME**, BIG HORN COUNTY, MONTANA
9. **FRIENDS HOSPITAL**, PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA

GEOLOGY THEME STUDY

10. **PETRIFIED SEA GARDENS**, SARATOGA SPRINGS, NEW YORK

PREPARED BY: Patty Henry TELEPHONE: (202) 343-8163

LABOR THEME STUDY


- 11. *HARMONY MILLS*, COHOES, NEW YORK
- 12. *BOST BUILDING*, HOMESTEAD, PENNSYLVANIA

ARCHEOLOGY

- 13. *MISSION SANTA INES*, SOLVANG, CALIFORNIA
- 14. *BETHABARA*, WINSTON-SALEM, NORTH CAROLINA
- 15. *FORT CORCHAUG*, CUTCHOGUE, NEW YORK

In accordance with National Historic Landmarks Program regulations, the Board reviewed the studies nominating these properties for Landmark status and found that the properties meet National Historic Landmarks Program criteria. The Board, therefore, voted to recommend that they be designated as National Historic Landmarks.

I recommend that you approve the Board's recommendations and designate as National Historic Landmarks the 15 properties listed above.

APPROVE:  _____ DISAPPROVE: _____
DATE: JAN 20 1999 DATE: _____

ATTACHMENT

FEB 9 1999

PH 2/2/99
Shuler
2-2-99
Greenberg
2-2-99
Stewart
2-5-99
0002
02/09/99

H3417(2280)

Honorable Arlen Specter
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Specter:

I am pleased to inform you that the John Coltrane House in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania has been found to possess national significance in the history of the United States. As a result, the Secretary of the Interior designated this property a National Historic Landmark on January 20, 1999.

The purpose of landmark designation is to identify and recognize nationally significant sites and to encourage their owners to preserve them. Landmarks are chosen after careful study by the National Park Service. They are evaluated by the National Park System Advisory Board and designated by the Secretary of the Interior in accordance with the Historic Sites Act of 1935 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

Designation as a National Historic Landmark automatically places a property in the National Register of Historic Places, if it is not already so listed, and extends to it the safeguards and benefits provided by the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 and other Federal laws protecting historic properties.

Each Landmark is eligible to receive one bronze plaque to commemorate the property's designation. The owner(s) will shortly be contacted by a National Historic Landmarks coordinator for their area about applying for their plaque. If you have any questions about the plaque or the designation please contact Ms. Patty Henry of the National Historic Landmarks Survey at 202/343-8163.

We are pleased to include the John Coltrane House on the roll of National Historic Landmarks as significant representatives of our Nation's heritage.

Sincerely,



Robert Stanton
Director

IDENTICAL LETTER SENT TO:

Honorable Arlen Specter
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Rick Santorum
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Honorable Chaka Fattah
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

bcc: 4500 B. Bolger
0001 Stanton
2200 Stevenson
2605 CCU
2280 Henry
2280 JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE (NHL PENDING)

FNP:PHenry:mg:1/29/99
F:\NR-NHL\notice2d.ltr

H3417(2280)

FEB 26 1999

Ms. Mary Alexander
1511 North 33rd Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19121

Dear Ms. Alexander:

I am pleased to inform you that the John Coltrane House in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania has been found to possess national significance in the history of the United States. As a result, the Secretary of the Interior designated this property a National Historic Landmark on January 20, 1999.

The purpose of landmark designation is to identify and recognize nationally significant sites and to encourage their owners to preserve them. Landmarks are chosen after careful study by the National Park Service. They are evaluated by the National Park System Advisory Board and designated by the Secretary of the Interior in accordance with the Historic Sites Act of 1935 and the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966.

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We are pleased to include the John Coltrane House on the roll of National Historic Landmarks as significant representatives of our Nation's heritage.

Sincerely,

(Sgd) Carol D. ~~Shull~~

Carol D. Shull
Chief, National Historic Landmarks Survey and
Keeper, National Register of Historic Places

IDENTICAL LETTER SENT TO:

OWN: Ms. Mary Alexander
1511 North 33rd Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19121

HEO: Honorable Edward Rendell
Mayor of Philadelphia
215 City Hall
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

SHPO: Dr. Brent D. Glass, SHPO
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
P.O. Box 1026
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania 17108-1026

cc: Mr. Randall Cotton
Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
1616 Walnut Street, Suite 2310
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19103

bcc: B. Bolger, PSO
C. Pitts, PSO
0001 Stanton
2200 Stevenson
2280 Henry
2280 JOHN COLTRANE HOUSE (NHL)

FNP:PHenry:mg:2/12/99
F:\NR-NHL\nOTICE2D.LTR

Ms. Delores E. Dyer
National Park Service
Northeast Field Region
U.S. Custom House, 200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

Telephone: 215/597-1578

Dear Ms. Dyer:

As the owner(s) of John Coltrane House located in Philadelphia, PA and designated on January 20, 1999 (I/we) hereby make application for a bronze plaque identifying the property as a National Historic Landmark.

1. (I/We) are conscious of the responsibility that goes with the ownership and care of a property classified as having National significance and worthy of National Historic Landmark status.
2. (I/We) understand that you may request periodic inspection of the property by a representative of the National Park Service for the purpose of monitoring its integrity and the nature and degree of any threats thereto.
3. (I/We) agree that should the Landmark designation ever be revoked in accordance with the procedures outlined in the National Historic Landmarks regulations, the bronze plaque will be removed and returned upon request by the National Park Service.
4. (I/We) further agree to affix the plaque in a suitable location in public view.

Sincerely,

Mary L. Alexandri 3/11/99

Owner's Signature/Date

Name of Contact Person, if not Owner

Same

Mailing Address (if P.O. Box, also include street address for shipping purposes)

*1511 N. 33rd Street
Philadelphia, PA 19121*

City, State, Zip Code

Please keep a copy of this Agreement for your records

Assigned to Lisa Deline
Draft Due 3/13/2009

2/7/09

Dear Mr. Salazar:

I am sending you a copy of a letter I sent to Present Obama and some photos also. The reason why I am sending the information to you is because I think that John Coltrane is a world famous musician and is given a lot disrespect. He needs to be given respect. His house should not be falling down. He needs to be given national respect as one of the most dynamic creators of Jazz music. His house should be preserved and protected by the National Park Service. I hope your department can do something. I do not know what you have to do but I hope that you can do it. I have also included photos of Edgar Allan Poe house in Phila. to your house this is well take care of and protect by your Department. John Coltrane house deserves the same care by your Department. I am sending a letter and photos to my Congressman also.

Respectfully Yours

Harold H. Palmer
P.O. Box 44146
Phila. Pa. 19144

NHL
listed
1/20/1999

(215) 843-9938

RECEIVED

2009 FEB 20 PM 3:55

RECEIVED

347095

15

2/7/09


Dear President B. Obama:

I saw you being interviewed and you were talking about your assistant and how he was like a little brother to you and you were trying to introduce him to the music of John Coltrane. When you said the words John Coltrane it made me think that I could contact you to get something done that I have been working on for more than 12 years. I have been trying to get Coltrane's house fixed up and protected from sale or destruction. I have written letters to lots of people to get their help. I did not get any response. It has not stopped me from trying again and again some one out there can get this done. About 2 weeks ago something came to me to go to the Edgar Allen Poe House at 234 North 7th Street in Phila.Pa. I was very glad that I went there the people were very helpful. They provided the history of the house and how it became part of the National Park Service. I thought to myself maybe the house of John Coltrane can become part of the National Park Service. Coltrane is as famous if not more famous than E. A. Poe. To get it done is the problem. I decided to write a letter to you and to my Congressman and to the Department of Interior. I hope that you can do something Coltrane does not need to be disrespected this way. I will send you photos of both places so that you can see the conditions of both. In 1985 a marker was put outside of John Coltrane's house at 1511 North 33rd Street by the Pa. Historical Commission. They put markers all over Phila. to show who live or was born at that location. This is the first part of what I am trying to do. If the first part is done to get the house of Coltrane put under the protection of the National Park Service then it can help get the second part done. Jazz musicians should be given the respect that they deserve. Jazz is an American art form that is not looked at with any credibility. In Phila. we have the Academy of Music it is an old institution but that is supported by the rich. They have raised 30 or 40 millions of dollars to preserve this place because it is part of the European-American culture, Classical Music. Jazz is Afro-American Classical Music. We must preserve and protect Jazz. There are a lot of Jazz musicians who were born or lived in Phila. so I feel that there needs to be a Jazz Museum in Phila. to honor and give respect to Jazz Musicians. The main feature of this Jazz Museum will be John Coltrane since he created so much music and is known all over world. This will be a multi-functioning non-profit museum. It will have a theater so it can do music shows and plays. It will have a restaurant and a ballroom for weddings and other functions. A small cafe for that Jazz Club feeling. It will have a gift shop to sell music and art and things that are related to the museum. It will have classrooms for music lessons and a summer music camp. This can be done with public, corporate and government money. All money raised will go into a trust fund to maintain the museum The membership to the museum will be family friendly. The membership will be \$5.00 dollars per year. VIP membership will be more and there will be lifetime memberships .This membership will get people discounts or meals and shows, discount on store items. When you will get a plastic card with the picture of John Coltrane on it. It will say that you are a JAZZ CLUB MEMBER .If the promotion is done right John Coltrane will become the Elvis of the Jazz world. People will come from all over the world to visit the Jazz Museum. The Jazz Museum will help musicians get instruments. The public can give new or used instruments to help to help those in need. The Jazz Museum

will do it's best help getting instruments to schools and bands. It will work with music schools and other groups to get music back in schools .This Jazz Museum should be dedicated to a man who loved Jazz with a passion. He spent his time and money to promote it. I have heard from a lot of people that he was a very decent man This man is Ed Bradly of the "60 MINUTES" television show. It would only be the greatest respect to show this kind of person. I hope that you can help or can do something to protect the contributions that Coltrane has made to the world as a musician. If his house falls down or people forget where he came from it will be a shame and it shows the lack of respect we have for him. Mr.President I hope to hear from you in the future.

**Respectfully Yours
Harold H. Palmer
P.O.BOX 44146
Phila.Pa.19144**

PHZ 3/16/09
CML


3/18/09

A. H. Lee
3/23/09
Jan Matthews
3/25/2009

MAR 25 2009

H34(2280)

Mr. Harold H. Palmer
P.O. Box 44146
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19144

Dear Mr. Palmer:

Thank you for your letter of February 7, 2009, to Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, concerning the condition of the John Coltrane House in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Secretary Salazar has asked that the National Park Service reply to your inquiry.

As you know, the John Coltrane House was designated a National Historic Landmark (NHL) by the Secretary of the Interior in 1999. The National Historic Landmarks Program, which is administered for the Secretary of the Interior by the National Park Service (NPS), is a Federal program that recognizes a property's significance to the American people. However, becoming a NHL does not imply Federal ownership or administration of the property.

The most recent information that the National Historic Landmarks Program has for the property indicates that it is privately owned by a member of John Coltrane's family. Under the guidelines of the NHL Program, a property owner retains the right to determine what, if any, repairs or work will be done to his or her property. The NPS has no legal authority to require owners to perform or refrain from performing any repairs or alterations to their property utilizing non-Federal funds. However, because the John Coltrane House is an NHL, it meets one of the qualifications for the Save America's Treasures (SAT) grant program which is also administered by the National Park Service. To apply for an SAT grant, the owner of a property must be a Federal agency, a state or local government, a Federally recognized Indian Tribe, or a nonprofit, tax-exempt 501(c) organization. We have enclosed some information from the web site about the Save America's Treasures Grant program that you may wish to share with the private owner of this property.

The National Park Service monitors the condition of National Historic Landmarks. This monitoring is done by the various NPS regional offices. You may want to contact the NHL program manager for the Philadelphia area and inform him of your concerns about the condition of the John Coltrane House. Bill Bolger may be reached by phone at 215-597-1649; by e-mail at bill_bolger@nps.gov; or by mail at

Northeast Regional Office, NPS, 200 Chestnut Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106.

Mr. Bolger may be able to assist you in making contact with the private owner, or other entities that have shown interest in the preservation of the John Coltrane House.

The National Park Service appreciates your concern for the preservation of our nation's heritage.

Sincerely,

Janet Snyder Matthews

Janet Snyder Matthews, Ph.D.
Associate Director, Cultural Resources

Enclosure

bcc: Northeast Regional Office, B. Bolger
2280 Loether; Lord; Deline; COLTRANE, JOHN, HOUSE (NHL)
2285
2201
Basic File Retained In 2280
FNP:PHenry:03-19-09:OP:S:/nr-nhl/nominations final/Coltrane threat reply

INFORMATION FOR NOTICE LETTERS

PLEASE ATTACH ADDITIONAL PAGES IF NECESSARY.

EXACT NAME OF PROPERTY

(The historic name is preferred. This name will be used throughout the process and for purposes of listing and filing.)

John Coltrane House

Other Name if different from name listed above: _____

LOCATION(S) OF PROPERTY (Be as complete as possible; give locational data for all sites involved.)

Street Number: 1511 North 33RD St
Town: Philadelphia
State: PA Zip: 19121 County: _____
Other: _____

OWNER(S) OF PROPERTY

Are there multiple owners? (YES)/(NO) (If yes, please provide complete information for each owner on an attached page.)

Name: Mary Alexander
Title: _____
Street Number: 1511 North 33RD St
Town: Philadelphia
State: PA Zip: 19121 Telephone: 215-763-1118

Is this owner: PRIVATE or PUBLIC?

If Public, is this owner: LOCAL, STATE, FEDERAL?

HIGHEST LOCALLY-ELECTED OFFICIAL(S) for the jurisdiction identified as location of the property.

(NOTE: These individuals must hold an ELECTED office; appointed administrative officers do not meet this requirement.)

Name: Honorable Edward Rendell
Title: Mayor of Philadelphia
Street Number: 215 City Hall
Town: Philadelphia
State: PA Zip: 19107 Telephone: (215) 686-1776

SENATORS and CONGRESSIONAL REPRESENTATIVE(S) Please list the names of these individuals.

(NOTE: List only the representative(s) for the district(s) in which the property is located.)

Chaka Fattah; Arlen Specter; Dick Santorum

OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES it would be advisable to inform of this nomination.

(NOTE: These individuals will receive copies of notice correspondence.)

Name: Mr. Randall Cotton
Title: Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia
Street Number: 1616 Walnut Street, Suite 2310
Town: Philadelphia
State: PA Zip: 19103 Telephone: _____

PLEASE ATTACH ADDITIONAL PAGES IF NECESSARY.

9



the one a few years earlier when a sprightly Richard Nixon welcomed Duke Ellington on the occasion of Duke's seventieth birthday.

While they were in Washington, Mingus and his wife met the baritone saxophonist Gerry Mulligan who had been spending a lot of time in Mexico. Mulligan had taken an interest in Indian medicine, and recommended a remarkable eighty-year-old woman healer whom he thought might be able to help Charles. So Mingus and Susan took off to Mexico in search of healers, shamans and mediums. It did not work, but Susan retained happy memories of the trip: 'It was the best possible thing we could have done. We spent six months in Mexico with some kind of hope, and Mingus keeping everyone's spirits up driving all over the place, looking for the best restaurants everywhere.' He died in January 1979.

By using his band like an artist uses colour in his palette, treating it like a complex instrument and using it to think with, Mingus resembled the man he admired the most, Duke Ellington. The bassist brought back to modern jazz the rich texture and variety of sound that had been so eroded by the rather predictable formula of be-bop: play the tune, solo number one, solo number two, drum flourish, play the tune to close. Despite his fierce emotions, or perhaps because of them, Mingus created a more complex structure as a way of controlling feeling. He re-invented some of the formal devices of Morton, using bridges, interludes and trios. This emphasis on form was, in a way, like a poet turning his back on the brilliant confessional verse of Charlie Parker's solos, and going back to rhyme and metre. It meant that modern jazz was freed from its obsession with iconoclasm for its own sake and became more purposeful and more rooted.

John Coltrane

John Coltrane and Miles Davis were both born in 1926, only six years after Charlie Parker, yet neither of them thought of themselves as contemporaries of the highly precocious Bird. They belonged to a younger generation, one that saw the be-bop revolution as a natural base camp for their musical explorations. Neither Coltrane nor Davis would be satisfied with the rather dry recreations of the bop idiom perpetrated by Sonny Stitt and others in the 1950s. The sentimental glorification of be-bop purveyed by Dizzy Gillespie during long stretches of his later career did not appeal to them either. In fact, they came to think of Dizzy as a one-man be-bop revival movement – a sort of Bunk Johnson of Minton's.

Davis and Coltrane came together in the 1950s to make several highly influential records under Miles's leadership, but when they parted company their musical paths diverged sharply. Coltrane established himself on the challenging heights of the avant garde, and his work was spiced with eastern philosophy and clouded in mysticism. Davis was to outlive Coltrane by more than twenty years, and impatient with what he perceived as the obscurity of jazz in the 1960s, tried to make the music more accessible during the 1970s and 80s.

John Coltrane was born in the town of Hamlet, North Carolina, but shortly after John's birth his father's business as a tailor took the family to Philadelphia. The lively east coast city which was close to New York and the jazz scene, provided a congenial base for Coltrane as he grew up and developed an aptitude for music. He started to learn on the clarinet, moving on to the alto saxophone during his last year at high school.

Then World War II intervened and Coltrane was called up to join the navy. His experience of military life was distinctly more benign than that of Lester Young, for Hawaii was his none too daunting posting, and John's natural taciturnity and good manners kept him out of trouble. He even got to play in the US Navy band on the

chapter 9

Jazz Greats
David Perry
Phaidon Press
London, 1996

island, reverting to the clarinet to do so. The war years negotiated without trauma, Coltrane went back to Philadelphia quietly determined to forge a career in jazz. From the start he adopted the serious-minded and painstaking approach that would characterize his attitude to the music. He listened to Stravinsky and Poulenc, and transcribed solos by Parker and Young, so that he could study their structure. Many studious hours were spent in Philadelphia Library with Jimmy Heath, Coltrane's contemporary and fellow saxophonist, trying to unravel the secrets of jazz.

Coltrane, like Heath, was playing alto saxophone at this time. They were both, by definition, in awe of Charlie Parker whose dazzling technical brilliance was reaching its height in the late 1940s. Perhaps Coltrane intuited that a change of instrument was called for if he was to find his voice in jazz. In any case he took the opportunity to join up with Eddie 'Cleanhead' Vinson's blues band in 1947, in which he was required to play tenor. He spent an enjoyable nine months on the road with the sleek, shiny-skulled blues singer.

Coltrane's first big break meant a temporary return to the alto saxophone. It was an offer to join Dizzy Gillespie. Dizzy, Parker's major co-conspirator in the be-bop revolution, had formed a big band which specialized in Cuban idioms as a way of colouring the tempos and harmonies of be-bop. Cuban music and its relationship to jazz was a lifelong interest of the aimable trumpeter. The effect of a big band playing fast be-bop themes, if exciting, was slightly ungainly. Dizzy's outfit had a strangely futuristic, striving, machine-age sound that was distinctly eccentric. It was the last in a line of under-documented and under-recorded outfits that took big band jazz from Kansas City idioms to be-bop idioms – Jay McShann, Earl Hines, and Billy Eckstein were Dizzy's predecessors – and provided invaluable work for musicians like Gillespie, Parker, and Coltrane himself in their early years.

For Coltrane, the big band arrangements were a chance to shine at reading and transcribing – all those hours of study in the Philadelphia Library had not been wasted. But like many big band leaders in the post-war era, Gillespie found that as expenses spiralled, it became impossible to carry on. What is more the Gillespie big band had not been received with universal rapture. At one concert in Arkansas there were more people on stage than in the audience. So Dizzy formed a

quintet, and John Coltrane not only managed to find his way into the group, but also secured the tenor saxophone chair. He was to stay with tenor for the rest of his career, augmenting it with important work on the soprano sax, but never again returning to Charlie Parker's alto territory.

Coltrane's work with the Gillespie quintet began to show his taste for the difficult in music. The aspiring, almost ominous style that was to characterize his work was already well developed. It was a very different sound from the deceptively effortless lucidity of Lester Young at his pre-war best; different too from the sumptuous solos of Coleman Hawkins which were still essentially rooted in the melodies of the 1920s and the 1930s.

John was a tall, serious-looking young man who habitually leaned forward as if trying to catch what was being said to him. Quiet, thoughtful and introspective, he was popular with everyone, especially dentists. He had a compulsive desire for anything sweet he could lay his hands on – what was left of his teeth was appalling to behold and other musicians were at a loss to know how such a serious-minded saxophonist could do such a thing to himself. But somehow Coltrane coped, and even when the time came for major dental surgery his playing was apparently unaffected.



ing with
Morgan
re both in the
ie Orchestra
40s

After the Gillespie experience, the 1950s went slowly for him. He was in and out of various uninspiring rhythm and blues outfits. Not that Coltrane, for all his burgeoning interest in the cutting edge of jazz, was a musical snob. When the chance came to join Earl Bostic's rabble rousing band, which used the rhythm and blues idiom more effectively than most, John jumped at it. But a more promising opportunity was just around the corner. The great altoist, Johnny Hodges, had left the Ellington Band taking a few of the Duke's other stars with him, and formed his own orchestra. Hodges offered Coltrane a seat in the saxophone section, and it was accepted with alacrity. After years of working with Duke, Hodges was attempting to find his own musical voice. Unfortunately, he discovered that freedom from Ellington was not to be the release for which he had hoped. It turned out to be a bitter demonstration of how much his own brilliant instrumental work depended on the Ellington ambience to nourish it. Coltrane's work with Hodges appeared to suffer from his leader's failure to find a voice for his band. But the root of John's problems at this time were not so much musical as pharmaceutical.

During his time with Hodges, and no one really knows why, Coltrane became a heroin addict, a cross he chose to bear for about four years. He functioned on a daily level and even managed to maintain his equable easy-going manner, but the heroin made him musically erratic, and the 'clean' Hodges felt moved to let him go. Luckily though, in 1955, Miles Davis needed a tenor player to replace Sonny Rollins and the trumpeter came knocking on Coltrane's door. It is difficult to judge whether Davis's own kicking of a serious drug habit not long before, made him more or less tolerant of such misdemeanours among his sidemen. At the time he hired Coltrane, his band comprised Red Garland on piano, Paul Chambers on bass and Philly Jo Jones on drums, all of whom were on heroin. It was known as the J & B band – the junk and booze band.

As both soloist and composer, Miles had a crisp, laconic style that was at the opposite end of the spectrum from Coltrane's prolix tenor playing. It might be imagined that Davis would have an instinctive antipathy to John's style, but he was an enlightened leader and gave Coltrane the freedom to develop his 'sheets of sound'.

Around this time, John married a Muslim from Philadelphia called Naima. Her quiet faith, which helped her stand up to the pressures

produced by his drug habit, must have been influential in broadening John's cultural and religious horizons. But his addiction was, if anything, getting more serious, and at the end of 1956 he was fired from the Davis quintet.

There followed a period with the spiky, brilliant pianist Thelonius Monk which inspired the finest playing in John's career to date. An incident in a mid-1957 recording session shows what difficulties Coltrane's heroin addiction had got him into. The band were playing *Well, You Needn't*, and high on junk, John was dozing off in the studio. Monk reached the end of his piano solo and was about to cue Coltrane when he looked up and saw him, eyes closed, nursing his sax in his lap. From the keyboard Monk shouted, 'Coltrane, Coltrane!' and the saxophonist stood up like an automaton, played a perfectly articulated solo, sat back down again and nodded back off to sleep. Monk's desperate cry is preserved on the recording.

Later in 1957 Monk and Coltrane went on to play a residency of legendary brilliance at the Five Spot in New York. The pitch of creativity was such that a moment's loss of concentration meant musical oblivion. As John put it, 'once lost, it was like walking into an empty lift shaft'. Monk's habit of dancing on stage during other people's solos only added to the extraordinary drama. The Five Spot was packed, and Coltrane's collaborators-to-be, Elvin Jones and Archie Shepp, were in the audience night after night, enthralled by what they heard.

It seems likely that the very demands of the time with Monk convinced Coltrane that if he did not kick the drug habit he would be finished as a musician. Certainly it was in 1957 that he turned his back on heroin forever. Just for good measure he went teetotal at the same time, and was never to touch another drop of alcohol. During the intensely religious period at the end of his life, Coltrane often referred to 1957 as the year of his spiritual awakening.

The association of drugs and jazz is a cliché often used to add spice to the image of the music as some sort of underworld art, as if heroin addiction were fun. But it would be wrong to dismiss the connection between drugs and jazz as a stereotype with no basis in reality. While it is true that some highly influential jazz men were moderate drinkers and never touched anything stronger than aspirin, King Oliver and Duke Ellington among them, it would be pointless to deny that serious drug abuse did penetrate jazz culture deeply and damagingly.



The brilliance of pianist Thelonius Monk, here playing in a New York loft in 1968, was a great inspiration to Coltrane during the 1950s.

It is not unique to jazz of course. Whenever art has put a premium on the visionary rather than on formal perfection, drugs have played a part. Poets as diverse as Baudelaire, Coleridge and Rimbaud used opium to further their creativity. Jazz is not necessarily visionary in that sense, but improvisational composition night after night in public, in an ambiance where mistakes or even mediocrity were unacceptable, was an extremely demanding experience. Heroin provided long-lasting 'highs' of great lucidity, with none of the debilitating dysfunctional effects of alcohol. Furthermore, the negative effects of heroin, now widely known, were less frequently acknowledged in the fifties and sixties. Nevertheless, it is surprising that someone as disciplined and austere as John Coltrane, or as self-confident as Miles Davis should start on heroin.

Some have blamed the Mafia for targeting the black community and pushing hard drugs into Harlem after World War II. The novelist and playwright James Baldwin once told me his theory which was even more sinister. He blamed the State for dumping drugs in the ghetto as some sort of malign social experiment. He added darkly 'I make that accusation and I dare anyone, dare anyone to call me on

it.' Paranoid though Baldwin's notion may sound, the outbreak of the hard drug habit in Harlem was remarkably sudden. It raced through the black community like a forest fire, destroying families, community support systems, and social structures.

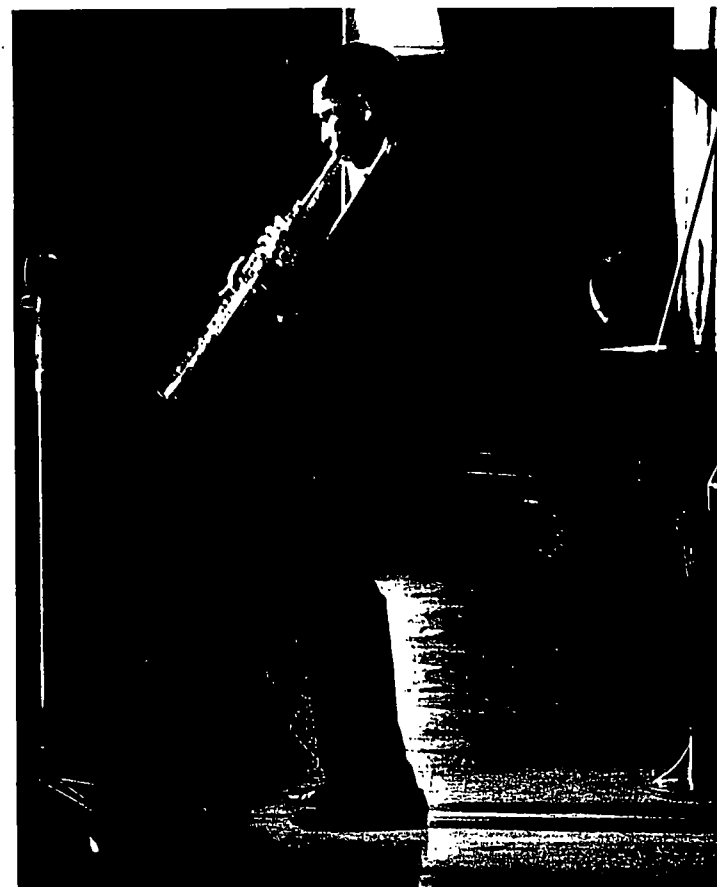
Jazz music is, to some extent, a reflection of the stimulants or abstinences that sustained its musicians. There is something of the loud conviviality of alcohol about New Orleans jazz, while the dreaming fantasies of Lester Young smack of marijuana. Be-bop reflects the frantic dislocation of heroin, while the later work of Coltrane seems powered by an ardent asceticism and a quest for spiritual purity.

By renouncing drugs in 1957 Coltrane wanted to set a new tone and to take jazz out of the shadow of destructive dependencies. And in this respect he succeeded magnificently. Despite the horrors of the ghetto crack wars, jazz musicians have now, for the most part, turned their backs on drugs: these days a shot of bourbon against the winter cold, or a thirst-quenching beer in summer are more typical pre-concert stimulants.

After his withdrawal period had passed, Coltrane emerged buoyant and with something to prove – not least to Miles Davis, the leader who had let John go a year earlier because of his addiction. He rejoined Davis for what was to be one of the most productive periods in the trumpeter's career. The seminal LP *Milestones* provided an interesting example of Coltrane's continuing search for difficulty. In the tune *Two Bass Hit* he deliberately chose to solo in D Flat because it was a difficult key, eschewed by many of his colleagues. For John, it was a matter of honour to make it sound as natural as the key of C. Coltrane's tenor style lacked the natural elegance of Lester Young's, and often the long asymmetrical phrases he developed impressed more by dint of their intensity of feeling than by their inherent musicality.

The problem of Coltrane's prolixity resurfaced in a more acute form than it took during his first stint with Davis, because altoist Cannonball Adderley had joined the group, and solo space was at a premium. At an Apollo Theatre concert, Coltrane was blowing away, eyes closed and oblivious to everything for about fifteen minutes. When the number was over Davis went up to him and asked him why he had gone on so long. 'I couldn't find anything good to stop on,' said John. 'All you gotta do is take the horn out of your mouth,' explained Miles, thoughtfully.

John Coltrane playing the soprano sax, the instrument on which he recorded much of his finest work



While working with Davis on *Milestones* and *Kind of Blue* Coltrane also began recording under his own name. Indeed the sheer volume of work he undertook in 1958 was evidence in itself of his newly 'cleaned up' state. The success of his LP *Giant Steps* convinced him that the time was right to go his own way. The record was hailed as a major landmark in jazz history, although in retrospect it sounds rather dry, with its ostentatious and self-conscious complexity. Coltrane's real breakthrough as a leader, however, came when he took a break from the tenor and moved to soprano saxophone.

This instrument had come back into fashion partly because Sidney Bechet's achievements on it were being reassessed following his death

in 1959. It had a beguiling, almost Islamic tone that was well suited to the oriental philosophies that were beginning to interest Coltrane. The soprano led him to try out Indian scales and African repeating figures. He experimented with harmonics using the mouthpiece to produce two notes at once.

The 1960s announced themselves with a rich burgeoning of experimental jazz. Ornette Coleman's free-form experiments, Eric Dolphy's work with Mingus, Albert Ayler, John Gilmore – they were all pushing forward the frontiers of the music in different ways. Coltrane, with his inquisitive mind and appetite for achieving what was difficult, wanted to do the same.

The group he assembled to meet this challenge was one of the finest jazz quartets ever. Joining Coltrane on soprano sax were the brilliant pianist McCoy Tyner, the Detroit-born drummer Elvin Jones, and bassist Jimmy Garrison. Instead of scrambling tunes and coming up with something unrecognizable like the be-boppers, or going into improvisational free-fall like Eric Dolphy, Coltrane decided for the moment to stick with the structures and harmonies of American popular songs as his raw material. But, perhaps under the influence of McCoy Tyner, he looked further than the standard tunes that had served jazzmen in the 1940s and 50s until they were virtually threadbare.

The result was to create another example of the exhilarating tension between form and content that so often powered jazz music. In *My Favourite Things*, Coltrane and the quartet deconstruct the sanguine ditty from *The Sound of Music* in a brilliantly sustained piece of musical argument that is also inherently witty. Julie Andrews would hardly have recognized the oriental fervour of Coltrane's choruses, or the rich African web of Elvin Jones's percussion. This recording session was the final occasion when jazz on the cutting edge worked its magic on American popular song. Afterwards, modernists including Coltrane himself turned their backs on tin pan alley as a source of musical material, thus ending a sixty-year-old tradition.

Elvin Jones recalled these times with deep affection verging on awe – the musical rapport was such that the group never had to rehearse. Indeed, they avoided talking about the music lest articulating their feelings about it in words broke the spell of creativity.

My Favourite Things was Coltrane's last recording on the Atlantic label. His growing stature in the jazz world had won him a new



The great quartet formed in 1961: McCoy Tyner at the piano, Coltrane, Jimmy Garrison on bass and Elvin Jones on drums

contract with Impulse, where he teamed up with a highly sympathetic recording manager called Bob Thiele. Thiele was moved by the musical and spiritual odyssey Coltrane was embarked upon and did everything possible to shield him from the pressures exerted by some of the more conservatively minded executives at Impulse. In fact, in many ways Thiele was to the avant-garde musicians of the 1960s what John Hammond had been to the emerging swing bands in the 1940s. At the time, Coltrane's friend, the poet Le Roi Jones (now Amiri Baraka) paid Thiele the ultimate compliment by saying that he knew several black record executives who would not have put themselves on the line for Coltrane the way Bob did. Thiele, like John Hammond, was white.

One way Thiele found of protecting Coltrane from pressures within Impulse and also from the adverse criticism that generally greets the strenuously avant garde, was to persuade him to diversify a little and record some more familiar material, thus exposing him to a wider audience. In 1962 there was a record with Duke Ellington which by definition lent Coltrane some credibility among the jazz establishment. There followed an LP called simply *Ballads*, in which Coltrane, back on the tenor saxophone, simply played the tunes and yet managed to stamp his own musical personality on them. John went on to work with a vocalist, Johnny Hartmann, producing a sumptuous album in which songs like Billy Strayhorn's *Lush Life* and



her King leads
its march through
in 1965. Although
music was not
political, he hinted
pathies in pieces
ma, recorded

You Are Too Beautiful seemed like the still centre of the whirlwind of experimental creativity that was engulfing him.

He was also extending his spiritual and philosophical interests with a magpie-like voracity, and his metaphysical interests made him increasingly impatient with what he considered the entirely parochial matter of racial politics in America. Coltrane never turned his back on the Civil Rights Movement, as pieces like *Alabama* demonstrate; he just took a wider view, according to which a sort of transcendental spiritual awakening would render meaningless the question of colour. Certainly Coltrane was taking a different stance to the struggles of the 1960s from that of the more earthy and militant Charles Mingus.

On a personal level, the marriage with Naima, having survived the ordeal of John's heroin addiction, had broken down. Around 1963 John met a promising young pianist from Detroit called Alice McCleod, who was soon to become Mrs Coltrane and produce three sons. Naturally enough she also had ambitions to become the quartet's pianist.

The first really explicit manifestation of John's profound, pantheistic feelings about religion came with the LP *A Love Supreme*. It was followed by *Ascension*, in which the great quartet was joined by seven other players including Pharoah Sanders and Archie Shepp on tenor saxophones. The session took the form of a free-form blow that, as Bob Thiele said, 'scared the hell out of me'. All he knew in advance was that the band was going to play for about thirty minutes. *Ascension* sounds at times like a musical primal scream, but the musicianship of the players and the strength of Coltrane's feelings imbue it with a spiritual power which is deeply affecting.

No one who knew Coltrane doubted the seriousness or the sincerity of his philosophy; he was not one of those musicians, for example, who thought that having a sitar in your band automatically made you profound and interesting. But for McCoy Tyner, Elvin Jones and Jimmy Garrison, Coltrane's emphasis on the spiritual was increasingly at the expense of the music. Tyner was the first to go, exhausted by free-form rites of passage and sensing that Alice Coltrane, who shared John's spiritual interests as well as his domestic life, was destined to take over as the band's pianist. Coltrane had meanwhile been studying the spiritual aspects of African percussion. As a result, he decided that the band needed a second drummer to

augment and counterpoint Elvin Jones. The inevitable tension that developed between newcomer Rashied Ali, a name guaranteed to meet Coltrane's approval, and Jones was not exactly diffused by what Elvin called Ali's defensive insistence on sitting centre stage and pushing the senior drummer off to one side. Before long Elvin had moved off the bandstand altogether, and joined Ornette Coleman.

McCoy Tyner and Elvin Jones, both Coltrane's peers, were great musicians, whereas Alice Coltrane and Rashied Ali had nothing like their stature, and by hiring them Coltrane showed himself to be too much at the mercy of his philosophical notions. The fact that Alice was also his wife probably made any sort of discussion along those lines within the group awkward to deal with.

There is a whiff of 'spiritual correctness' hanging around Coltrane in these closing years of his life. The LP *Cosmic Music* provides a fairly good example of how the post-quartet music was developing. On a track called *The Sun*, Coltrane and Pharoah Sanders repeat the following invocation:

*May there be peace and love and perfection
throughout all creation,
May there be peace and love and perfection
throughout all creation ...*

This buddhistic feeling bore a surprising resemblance to Louis Armstrong's almost contemporary *Wonderful World* in which birds in the trees were really singing 'I love you ...'. In a curious way Coltrane's transcendental avant-garde exploration seemed to have brought him full circle back to the minstrel tradition of Armstrong.

By 1966, Coltrane was suffering from liver problems, a distant inheritance from his drinking and drugging days. His last LP *Expression* used the eerie arabesques of the soprano saxophone to great effect, hinting at imminent death and somehow anticipating the spiritual afterlife that Coltrane had prepared himself so ardently for.

When he died in 1967, John Coltrane's pantheistic philosophy and peace mongering were already being taken up by white hippies in San Francisco, and his oriental interests were being popularized (some would say vulgarized) by John Lennon and Yoko Ono. Perhaps Coltrane was delighted, and felt that his beliefs about the universality



Coltrane in contemplative mood towards the end of his life, looking not unlike the Buddha to whose teachings he adhered

of spiritual truth were somehow vindicated. But where did his late experiments leave the music? Despite the power of *Ascension* and *Expression* his was a highly esoteric and fiercely demanding idiom that was undoubtedly alienating much of jazz's natural constituency. On the other hand, as pure innovation, Ornette Coleman's experiments with harmonics and rhythm which predated Coltrane's avant-garde phase, seem to have been more radical and more influential.

In other words there is a danger that Coltrane's reputation may rest more on the perceived eccentricity of the spiritual beliefs he held late in life, than on the inherent value of his music. This impression is strengthened by a visit to the One Mind Evolutionary Transitional Church of Christ, in a run-down area of San Francisco. The odd Christian sect that worships there have taken John Coltrane as a sort of latterday patron saint. The liturgy combines the Book of Common Prayer with chants from *A Love Supreme* and informal dance and meditation sessions based on the music from *Sun Ship* and similar records. Devotees talk of 'Coltrane consciousness', and the love of Christ expressed through John's music. Admirable though all this may be on a pastoral level, it is difficult to resist the conclusion that some of Coltrane's late music drifted too far from the mainstream of jazz to sustain itself as jazz.

Something of John Coltrane's personal integrity came across in his music though. Whether it was the striving tenor solos on the *Milestones* LP, the majestic soprano work on *My Favourite Things* or the delicate, sinuous minimalism of *Expression*, Coltrane at his best could match the finest jazz ever played.

IO



**John W.
Coltrane
Cultural Society**



**“I want to be
the force which is
truly for good.”**

“In an interview in 1962, John Coltrane also said he believed his music transmitted “good.”

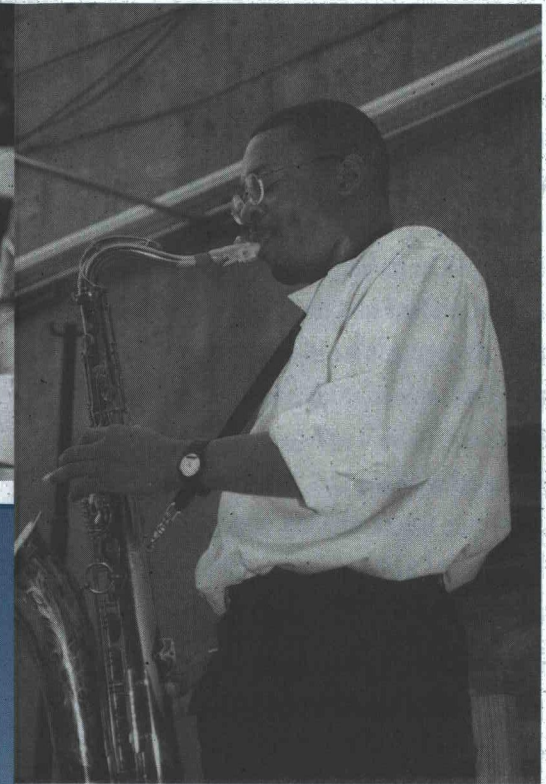
Mary Alexander, John Coltrane’s cousin (namesake for his classic composition “Cousin Mary”) and one of the founding “seven” of the Society, has taken his words and translated his spiritual energy into an organization honoring his work and name. “In this way I am the continuum. I am sharing his music and life with everyone; his legacy continues.”

The John W. Coltrane Cultural Society was founded in 1984 and incorporated in 1985. The Society, a 501(c)(3) cultural organization, historically designated by the Philadelphia Historic Commission July 17, 1990, is located in his Strawberry Mansion home; 1511 North 33rd Street. At this homesite, the classic “*Blue Trane*” was born and his spiritual journey began.

Programs

The future of America’s classical music depends upon education and exposure of our artform to young people. The John W. Coltrane Cultural Society offers:

Children’s Workshops—our workshops, conducted by professional musicians, are held throughout the Philadelphia Housing Authority; School District of Philadelphia and numerous community



organizations. Children who may not otherwise have access to musicians and artists are taught life skills via the techniques, discipline and structure applied in learning jazz. The JWCCS can customize workshops upon request.

Summer Backyard Concert Series—held in the backyard of the historic Coltrane home during June and July. Local jazz artists, poets and young emerging musicians as well as national talent are featured. Telephone the Society for dates and times.

Lecture Series (upon request)—with “Cousin Mary!” Discussion, video and Q&A on the life and work of John Coltrane with his cousin, Mary Alexander.

The Annual Birthday Celebration/Tribute—held around Coltrane’s September 23rd birthday at a Philadelphia jazz venue, features prominent jazz musicians and draws jazz aficionados from the tri-state area. The Birthday Celebration is the Society’s only major fund-raiser. Telephone the Society for details.

The Mural Project—telephone the Society for details.

Mission

The Mission of the John W. Coltrane Cultural Society is to:

- counteract negative constraints facing inner city children and youth through presentations of the positive cultural forces embodied in jazz and other cultural arts programs;
- preserve jazz as an American music tradition by making the cultural contributions of African American jazz artists more visible and accessible and;
- preserve the genius and legacy of John W. Coltrane by establishing the John W. Coltrane Cultural Center 1509 North 33rd Street.

John William Coltrane

John Coltrane was the world's most influential, innovative saxophonist in the development of modern jazz. Often copied, volumes have been written about him as musician and composer. He was born September 23, 1926 in Hamlet North Carolina. In high school he studied saxophone, E-flat alto horn and clarinet. At eighteen he moved to Philadelphia and continued his music studies at the Granoff Studios and Ornstein School of Music. During World War II he played with the U.S. Navy Band. After the War, Coltrane began playing with the bands of Eddie Vinson and Dizzy Gillespie; he joined the Miles Davis Quintet in 1955. By 1960 he had formed his own quartet and jazz history began.

John Coltrane's music, deeply spiritual and emotional, created a seamless intimate bond between artist and listener. His music summoned our deepest most inner selves and we appreciate and savor its significance.

John Coltrane's influence on jazz, contemporary, classical, rock and rap music has been internationally acclaimed. He died in 1967 at age 40, leaving thirty-seven albums in print.

The John W. Coltrane Cultural Society

1511 North 33rd Street, Philadelphia, PA 19121

(215) 763-1118; (215) 763-5856 (Facsimile)

Mary L. Alexander, Founder

Cynthia H. Webster, Executive Director

This brochure was made possible by grants from the William Penn Foundation and Philadelphia Cultural Fund.

Graphics: E. Diann Poole; Text: Cynthia Webster

Photos: Courtesy of the John W. Coltrane Cultural Society

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Philadelphia, PA 19121

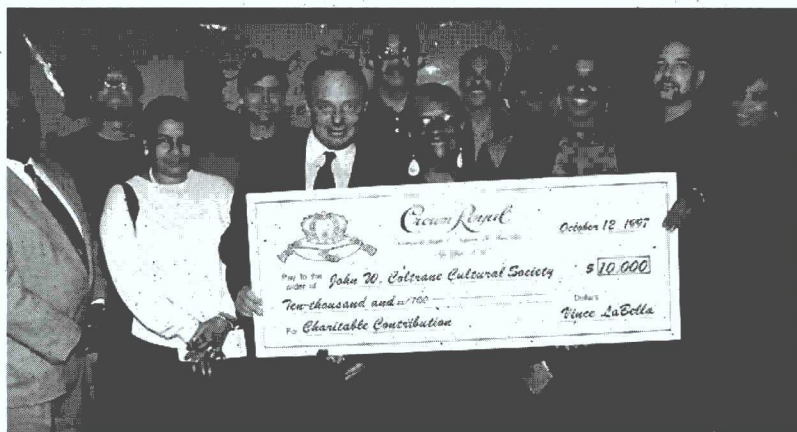


JOHN W. COLTRANE CULTURAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER



SUMMER/AUTUMN 1998

THE JWCCS ANNUAL BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION/CAPITAL CAMPAIGN KICK-OFF SPOTLIGHTED IN MARCH'S DOWNBEAT MAGAZINE



Back row, (l to r): James Miller (Program Assistant); Anthony Langford (JWCCS Board Member); John G. Carr (JWCCS Board Member); Rotan E. Lee (Capital Campaign Co-Chair); Harry G. Walker (JWCCS Board Member); and Eloise Wood-Jones (Program Consultant).

Front row, (l to r): Calvin M. Williams (JWCCS Board Chair); Joan G. Wilder (JWCCS Board Secretary); Vince LaBella (Crown Royal/Seagram Americas Manager of Sales for Eastern Pennsylvania); Mary L. Alexander (JWCCS Founder); Cynthia H. Webster (JWCCS Executive Director); Robert B. Bynum (Capital Campaign Co-Chair); Sandra N. Haughton (Capital Campaign Project Director).

To our great surprise and pleasure our Annual Birthday Celebration/Capital Campaign Kick-off was spotlighted in *the* magazine of jazz—*Downbeat*, March 1998. I remember that magical evening, October 12, 1997, when we were all stars. Together, at the Philadelphia Clef Club, we took that quantum leap to kick off the capital campaign to build the John W. Coltrane Cultural Center, and hosted sold-out performances heralding "Trane's" 71st birthday. The crowd savored the sounds of

New York's Manhattan Burn Unit (John Hicks on piano; bassist Mickey Bass; tenor saxophonist Craig Handy and drummer Eric Allen) and the poetry of the D'Zor House Poets, with special guest Amiri Baraka. An evening etched in memory.

Icing on the cake was a presentation by Vince LaBella, of Crown Royal/Seagram Americas, of its lead grant of \$10,000 for the capital campaign through the Monuments of African American Achievement Award.

The John W. Coltrane Cultural Society, located in the historically certified Coltrane home (John Coltrane purchased 1511 North 33rd Street in 1952) plans to relocate its administrative offices and expanded programming to the adjacent building, 1509 North 33rd Street; the site of the John W. Coltrane Cultural Center. Funds raised from the Society's exciting and ambitious capital campaign will be applied to the renovation of 1509.

JWCCS's Children's Music Workshops at PHA

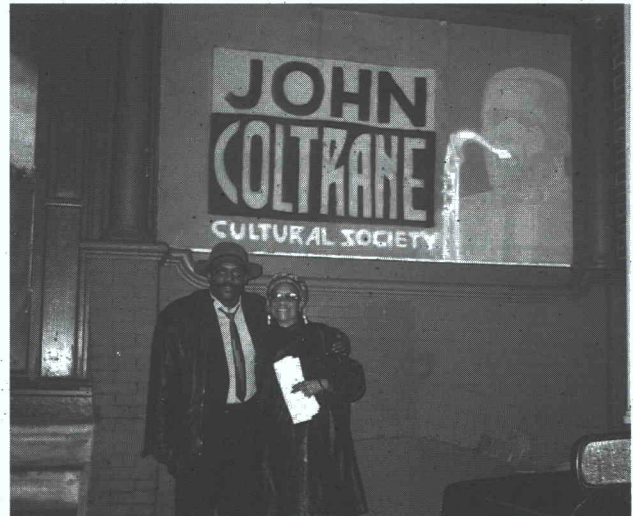
Philadelphia Housing Authority's Visiting Artists Program, sponsored the JWCCS's Children's Music Workshop Series for twenty (20) weeks at Martin Luther King Plaza and Fairhill Apartments at Hartranft. This year a ten piece youth percussion ensemble, Rhythm Expressions, was formed at King Plaza. The ensemble performed at Palumbo School and at the PECO Jazz Fest in February with premier saxophonist Gary Bartz. Rhythm Expressions will open for Monnette Sudler at the Backyard Concert July 25th at the Coltrane Home.

Artists teaching in the 1997-98 Children's Music Workshops included vocalist George V. Johnson; pianist Bernard Samuel; Charles Bowen on woodwinds, Julian Pressley on tenor saxophone; Leon Jordan, Lucky Thompson and Webb Thomas on drums and; from the Association of Latin American Musicians (AMLA) percussionists Jose Serrano and Idelfonso Rodriquez.

Again, a BIG thanks to Robert Bell, Resident Affairs Program Manager of the Philadelphia Housing Authority for his continued support of the John W. Coltrane Cultural Society.

PENN AT COLTRANE HOME-REPRISE

Jazz artist/instructor Suzanne Cloud and her music history class from the University of Pennsylvania visited the historic Coltrane Home and "Cousin Mary" Alexander in March for a Coltrane lecture and q&a. The lectures are part of the on-going Lecture Series sponsored by the John W. Coltrane Cultural Society and provided by Cousin Mary (upon request). If you are interested in our Lecture Series please contact the Society.



SAXOPHONIST DAVID MURRAY VISITS COLTRANE HOME

Tenor saxophonist/composer David Murray (appearing at the Painted Bride with his Power Quartet) took a break from his hectic and sold out performance schedule to visit "Cousin Mary" Alexander and the Coltrane Home March 7, 1998. Mr. Murray, who portrayed Coleman Hawkins in Robert Altman's motion picture "Kansas City" and is currently scoring a Broadway musical about Sachel Page, resides in Paris.

"WHAT'S UP?!"



- ~ Children's Workshop instructor Webb Thomas will be "making music" in Turkey for a month.
- ~ June 12, 1998 at the Philadelphia Clef Club-McCoy Tyner-star studded event to benefit the John W. Coltrane Cultural Society and Philadelphia Clef Club. Contact Society for details.
- ~ **It's a picnic! Bring your lunch!** We'll supply ice and cups! JWCCS's Summer Backyard Series begins June 20th with guest Odeon Pope; July 25th's guest is Monnette Sudler; rain dates are the following Sunday. Admission \$10.00 here in the backyard of the Coltrane Home.
- ~ September 27, 1998 the Annual Coltrane Birthday Celebration with the Ravi Coltrane Quartet; Philadelphia Clef Club, 736 S. Broad Street; admission \$20.00. Contact Society for time.

"INTERVIEW WITH..."



This column will feature interviews (by the executive director) with those who share the quest to build the John W. Coltrane Cultural Center and the burning desire to continue his legacy.

Sandra Norris Haughton, capital campaign consultant

CW Why do you want to help us build the Coltrane Center?

SH Coltrane's message is so fabulous and inspiring! If we had a place dedicated to him in Strawberry Mansion, the potential to the City and the world would be endless. The specific message is that you can overcome any adversity if you tune into your true self and open up to the Creator.

CW Sandra, do you think John would like what we're doing?

SH I think he is guiding what we are doing. The reason I say this is because the movement to create the Center is very organic and focused. But, because we are in an urban, low-income area we have to overcome many obstacles to get things done.

CW Yes, at times it is extremely difficult; I definitely feel he is guiding me. What do you mean by organic?

SH The desire to do the Center comes from community residents. You (our executive director) live in North Central. The board resides in North Philadelphia and many of the young people in the workshops are from North Philadelphia. Also, Cousin Mary has chosen to stay in Strawberry Mansion and remain in his home. This makes a very strong presence to this day.

CW This project is a great challenge, but it can also be quite spiritual and fulfilling. I've met some wonderful, truly dedicated and very interested people. As executive director, I strive everyday to keep a strong momentum going. I'm glad you're with us.

SH Thank you, I appreciate that. It's going to be something to see.

"kidz KORNER"



~ JWCCS was "kidz" sponsor for the Tony Award Winning "Bring in 'Da Noise Bring in 'Da Funk" Broadway Spectacular! appearing at Philadelphia's Forrest Theater. Our workshop students attended the Wednesday performance and met the cast. Kudos to our Program Consultant Eloise Wood-Jones.

~ JWCCS's "Rhythm Expressions" will perform with Monnette Sudler at the July 25th Backyard Concert.

"EXECUTIVE NOTES"



The capital campaign to build the John Coltrane Cultural Center is in full Swing! We welcome all who really want to help because there is lots to do! **BIG THANKS TO**—Robert Bynum and Rotan Lee who graciously accepted our invitation to be campaign co-chairs; Vince LaBella of Crown Royal/Seagram Americas—for the first capital campaign gift; Robert Bell and Julia Lopez of the Philadelphia Housing Authority Residents Affairs Office for sponsoring our Children's Workshop students to 'Bring in 'Da Noise Bring in 'Da Funk!'

"...FROM THE FOUNDER"



~ JWCCS's special friend and supporter Sigrid Deye of Munich Germany again vacationed with us, and it was great spending time with her. Sigrid thanks for such a great time, and your generous contribution to the Society.

~ After more than a decade of service to the Philadelphia community, the JWCCS can point with pride to a number of activities we have instituted to celebrate the music of John Coltrane. One such activity is the *Children's Music Workshops* which we have presented throughout the City and at the historic home of John Coltrane. We now have a children's percussion ensemble that grew from our workshops at Martin Luther King Plaza. We look forward to their performance at our *Backyard Concerts*.

~ The *Backyard Concerts* are another example of the work of the JWCCS to keep the music alive. Through our work, hundreds of people have had the opportunity to enjoy the music in the home where John Coltrane lived and composed.

~ To our many supporters, friends, former and present board members, staff and the capital campaign team—a big *Thank you* for your help in achieving our goals.

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The John W. Coltrane Cultural Society gratefully acknowledges
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Design: E. Diann Poole

Editor: Cynthia Webster

Photos: Courtesy of the John W. Coltrane Cultural Society



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Illustration by Paul Davis

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK

The Miracle of Coltrane: Dead at 40, Still Vital at 75

By BEN RATLIFF

Where to hear the sound that made him great, Page 8.

Performing artists like John Coltrane don't usually become famous. He was quiet, generous, even-tempered, honest, unjudgmental. There are no published reports of his flying off the handle, and he had no apparent gift for public relations. The stories of his desperate need to practice, above all else, start before he reaches 20; they continue through his first public successes and to the end. The end came with liver cancer at 40 in 1967. Coltrane would have turned 75 this year.

Even at his most expressive — in the final stretch, with the albums "Meditations" and "A Love Supreme," and his wild last work, "Interstellar Space" — he was a student, earnest, self-possessed, apparently uninterested in the shocking-diversion aspect of modernity.

It's remarkable how his recordings seem to slip free of the -isms within which they would

normally be placed; he never seems part of a movement. The albums are better understood as markers of his own thought than of the larger aesthetic sensibilities that jazz marched through at the time.

Sure, there may be few modal-jazz records more famous than "A Love Supreme" or "My Favorite Things," few records more representative of free-jazz than "Ascension" or "Interstellar Space." But the Coltrane albums are motivated by musical needs that didn't stem from existing aesthetic fashion.

And still, and still. Coltrane is so complicated that we must turn him around, look at him this way and that; his art wasn't insular and signified different things for different people. There is more poetry written about him, I'd

Continued on Page 8

The Miracle of Coltrane: Dead at 40 but Still a Vital Force at 75

Continued From Weekend Page 1

guess, than about any other jazz musician. There is more speculation on his personal, religious and otherwise extramusical life than most. (The most reliable source for information on his music, however, is Lewis Porter's biography, "John Coltrane: His Life and Music," University of Michigan Press, 1998.)

After an initial hesitation from 1958 to 1961, most musicians roughly his age or younger became his supporters, if not his idolaters. He is one of the five or so major figures of jazz whose playing you still routinely hear through the instruments of younger musicians; both in his sound and in his intellectual rigor, he was the next great saxophone icon after Charlie Parker.

One shouldn't forget how intimidating the jazz world was in the 1950's, especially for someone of Coltrane's disposition. He was a relativist, after all — a Libra, if you like. (Given the intense interest in spiritual matters involving Coltrane, I have a feeling — a certainty, actually — that someone will write to tell me what it means that he was born on the cusp between Virgo and Libra, on Sept. 23, 1926, in Hamlet, N.C.)

The cast of his mind was that he loved many things at once: swing-ballad phrasing and bebop and free playing, Broadway tunes and folk material, the rhythm-and-blues saxophone honk and the thin chime of the harp, Christianity and Islam. And in the 1950's the music seemed to demand those who were Coltrane's opposites: hot personalities who could cut through an overcrowded field with unilateral convictions. From bebop to cool, Ahmad Jamal to third-stream, the new Basie band to hard bop, Ornette Coleman to free jazz, the music was sprinting, advancing at brutal speed.

The top performers found their own outlets to defuse the tension. Many, including Coltrane, became heroin addicts; others, like Sonny Rollins, took long breaks to study and rehearse; others left the country altogether.

There are good stories about waiting for Coltrane — to end a solo, to get ready to record. The composer George Russell tells a story about recording his album "New York, N.Y." (Impulse/Universal) in 1958, in which Coltrane was called to play a single solo based on an unusual chord progression. The first-class studio band waited while Coltrane

stopped a take and walked off into a corner with Mr. Russell's sheet music. Coltrane wasn't well known then; the band assumed he was weak on harmony and had to rehearse.

What he was doing was beyond rehearsing; people tend to agree that at the time he was deep into the study of Nicholas Slonimsky's 1947 book "Thesaurus of Scales and Melodic Patterns." He came back with a more complicated harmony than Mr. Russell had written — "substitutions on my substitutions," as Mr. Russell put it. "He was substituting chords all over the place."

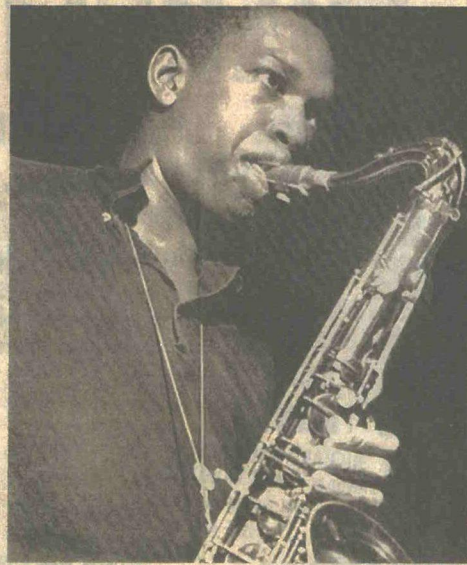
The End of Heroin

That session occurred in September 1958 in the middle of an astonishing three-year gestation period. In April 1957 Miles Davis fired Coltrane from his quintet. A month later Coltrane quit using heroin. Also in May he made his first solo recordings for Prestige. That summer he started playing with Thelonious Monk, beginning a six-month residence at the Five Spot jazz club in New York; in September he recorded "Blue Train" (Blue Note), a promise if still not quite an arrival.

In April 1958, rehired by Davis, Coltrane played on "Milestones" (Columbia), introducing a completely new version of himself with a new speed and sureness, a new urge to indicate sometimes three chords at once, producing swarms of interrelated notes that the critic Ira Gitler called "sheets of sound." He took part in Davis's "Kind of Blue" (Columbia) sessions in the spring of 1959, besting himself again, and a few days later he recorded the long-prepared étude "Giant Steps" (on the Atlantic album of the same name), which represented the culmination of his findings in harmonic substitutions.

Stop for a minute to take it all in. "Giant Steps" itself introduces a strong melody, and "Naima," also on the album, is the first of his great hymnlike ballads. But the album's dominating theme is harmonic research, and it can feel cold; he was phrasing in four-note patterns, which at times sound mathematical.

The band featured on the album wasn't a working unit, and the sound of the rhythm section in particular, with its crisp drumming patterns and walking bass, has little to do with what Coltrane would establish in the years ahead. (Coltrane knew this. In the liner notes comes his unusual honesty: "I'm worried that some-



John Coltrane, the next great saxophone icon after Charlie Parker.

times what I'm doing sounds just like academic exercises.")

Let's take up the rest of the gestation. In December 1959 he recorded the track "Harmonique" (on the Atlantic album "Coltrane Jazz"), another étude, focusing on multiphonics, the splitting of a single saxophone tone into two simultaneous tones. (He had first tried it gingerly on "While My Lady Sleeps" on the 1957 "Coltrane" on Prestige.) Four months later, in live recordings on tour with Davis in Europe, now packaged as "Miles Davis in Stockholm Complete" (Dragon), Coltrane turned research into art.

This is a favorite record of musicians; it is the breaking point, the moment when he pulled ahead and left jazz of the 1950's behind.

His Stockholm solos are long and searching, making surging blues figures out of split-tones, turning what were once harmonic convolutions into a sensuous new way of phrasing; it sounded, absolutely, like a new way of speaking an estab-

lished language. (Not long before this, the saxophonist Wayne Shorter reported, Coltrane had mentioned — apparently in earnest — that he wanted to learn how to speak English backward.)

Meanwhile, the great Miles Davis rhythm section, with Wynton Kelly on piano, Paul Chambers on bass and Jimmy Cobb on drums, sounds antiquated by comparison. Kelly was known as the greatest accompanist in modern jazz, and his clean, crisp funkiness as accompaniment seems so inappropriate to Coltrane's onslaught that at certain points Kelly simply stops, letting Coltrane roll. It wasn't a generational matter of young outstripping old: Coltrane was 33, Kelly 28. It just sounds like one.

Seven months later, in October 1960, Coltrane had almost all his best known band, having hired the pianist McCoy Tyner and the drummer Elvin Jones; they recorded "My Favorite Things" (Atlantic). Now the model was set; Coltrane, in and of himself, was complete.

from 1958 bears this out. But it's "Soul Trane" (Blue Note), from 1957, that best marks the beginning of his maturity as a composer and as a player.

Back to where we left off, in 1961: Coltrane's version of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "My Favorite Things," playing soprano saxophone instead of tenor, was a hit of major proportions; it brought him to a general audience. These days he would have been groomed for a five-year plan with maximum sales potential starting right after the music got on tape.

Motifs on the Fly

But a few months after "My Favorite Things" appeared in stores in March 1961, he added Eric Dolphy to the band — a furious, tart-toned, dissonance-embracing saxophonist who wasn't to everyone's liking. With him he made "Live at the Village Vanguard" (now available as a CD issue of the original single album or as the four-CD "Complete 1961 Village Vanguard Recordings" on Impulse).

The live album includes "Chasin' the Trane," a fearsome 15-minute blues in F that had no written melody, or anything else; some heard it as a scream of confusion, though it's one of the greatest examples of an improviser extrapolating on motifs he is creating on the fly.

A few critics had mildly swatted him before, including John S. Wilson in *The New York Times*; now his interviewers would begin: "I found your quintet's music completely bewildering. Can you explain what it is you are trying to do?" (This was from the English magazine *Melody Maker*. Coltrane's courtly response: "The sequences I build have a definite relationship to the chords. Can you give me a particular example of something that puzzled you?")

He toured Europe frequently in the early 60's, and some of the music is captured on "Live Trane," Fantasy's new seven-disc box set. Here Coltrane is reaching into modal jazz and raga tonalities, using the soprano saxophone more and more, and also solidifying the band; it's the sound of a group that knows what it's doing. "Impressions" is covered five times across the set. "My Favorite Things" six times; if you guessed that Coltrane's next move would be to escape the danger of a greatest-hits repertory, you were right.

The blues along with the hymn, the ballad and the standard still grounded Coltrane as his quartet's playing,

sponding to stressed words and phrases in the poem. (Mr. Porter's measured analysis of "A Love Supreme" in "John Coltrane: His Life and Music" illuminates the work.) Earlier in 1964 Coltrane had also worked from his own poems for several pieces on "Crescent" setting words to music may have focused his composing, accounting for the exceptional brilliance of both albums.

"A Love Supreme" sold well, and fame brought the opportunity for generosity; Coltrane had the power to bring new artists to the Impulse label, including Marion Brown, Archie Shepp and Pharoah Sanders. He brought these players into his own group as well, concocting larger frames for his music as he recorded at a quick pace; he wanted, he said, to have a group in which one unit played his established concept of rhythm and harmony and another played outside a tonal center and a steady beat.

He worked around the idea in different ways, first gathering a tentet for the remarkable suite "Ascension" (Impulse), brimming with annunciatory power. He added a second saxophonist (Pharoah Sanders) and a second drummer (Rashed Ali) for "Meditation" (Impulse); elsewhere he brought in flutists and percussionists.

As a marker of how much he had gotten away from an emphasis on harmonic exploration, he became fascinated with Albert Ayler, an original, explosive saxophonist whose improvisations on folklike themes were mostly based on major triads. (You can hear Ayler's direct influence on Coltrane's saxophone sound in some keening solo passages in "Peace on Earth" on Disc 1 of the posthumous Impulse release "Live in Japan.") He was quickly moving away from the quartet model that had held fast for five years; Elvin Jones and McCoy Tyner quit in early 1966, unable to hear themselves in the monsoon.

A Tour of the Planets

Coltrane's final album, "Interstellar Space" (Impulse), was recorded five months before his death, before his illness was diagnosed. (It's unknown what, specifically, caused Coltrane's liver cancer, though it could have developed from a hepatitis infection while he was using heroin, from 1948 to 1957.) On the surface it can seem his starkest, most forbidding work: a series of rugged duets

Finding His Own Sound

Almost all listeners find their way to Coltrane's major works from the early and mid-1960's, then only later figure out where he came from. Step back now and look at how far he had traveled. His earliest recordings, as a sideman, were with Dizzy Gillespie, Earl Bostic, Gay Crosse and Johnny Hodges. He didn't particularly distinguish himself; for the most part, he can barely be heard.

But by the mid-50's, recording with Davis beginning in 1955, he had a sound. On Sonny Rollins's 1956 record "Tenor Madness" (Prestige), Coltrane is just beginning, constructing an onrushing solo in distinction to Mr. Rollins's series of pointed, clean melodic improvisations. And on Coltrane's early Prestige recordings as leader, starting in 1957, all of which are available separately and collected on "John Coltrane: The Prestige Recordings," he is gradually making public his hunger for harmonic investigation; the sidelong "Sweet Sapphire Blues" on "Black Pearls"

now with Jimmy Garrison on bass, grew stronger, heavier, denser. (Some new collections on Impulse, "Spiritual" and "Standards," highlight two of these tendencies; as for ballads, I recommend two other Impulse releases, "John Coltrane and Johnny Hartman" and "Crescent," a brilliantly melancholic album that nearly qualifies as soul music.)

But he was onto larger, more challenging things as well.

With "A Love Supreme" (Impulse), the album-length suite of 1964, he created his defining work. For a while Coltrane had been indicating that harmony alone intrigued him less and that he wanted to stop playing the same tunes ad nauseam. This was his way out, a cohering long-form work written in progressive segments built on short pentatonic themes. The music is an offering to God, and "Psalm," the suite's closing section, is based on Coltrane's own religious poem.

The musical rhetoric of his playing is that of a sermon in a black American Pentecostal church, building in intensity, cresting on notes corre-

phone and Mr. Ali on drums, each starting with a theme that grows exponentially into scale-jumping, rhythmic flurries.

But it shouldn't be avoided. Every piece, beginning and ending with Coltrane's shaking of bells, is enveloped in serenity, no matter how furious the playing becomes in the middle. There are balladlike lulls ("Venus") and aggressive attacks ("Jupiter") and some of the old, Elvin Jones-like hard swing ("Saturn"). There is always a return to the theme.

This summer, while sprucing up and expanding the Coltrane catalog, Impulse/Universal released the last known live recording of Coltrane, "The Olatunji Concert" from April 1967. It is the absolute wild blue yonder of Coltrane's scream-music. I will go the distance with "Interstellar Space," yet I have found it impossible to keep pace with this album's headlong outpouring. Still, what a place for a consummate, deeply educated musician to end his travels: in a wild garden of sound, a kind of natural state.

Finding the Sound

For the 75th anniversary of John Coltrane's birthday, many theaters and jazz clubs around the country have been offering performances related to his work; they continue through early 2002. A sampling:

Performances

"COLTRANE REVISITED," Birdland, 315 West 44th Street, Manhattan, (212) 581-3080. The saxophonist Joe Lovano and company — Steve Kuhn (piano), Dennis Irwin (bass) and Idris Muhammad (drums) — will play Coltrane's music from throughout his career. Tonight and tomorrow night at 9 and 11; cover charge is \$35 (\$10 food or drink minimum).

"THE DOUBLE DUO: 75 MINUTES OF FLAME," Earl Hall, Columbia University, entrance at 116th Street east of Broadway, Morningside Heights, (212) 854-0093/6508. Original music by the "Double Duo" of

Pheeroan Aklaiff and Rashied Ali (Coltrane's last drummer) on percussion, and Ravi Coltrane, son of John Coltrane, and Mixashawn on saxophone. Tomorrow night at 8. Free.

MCCOY TYNER TRIO, Iridium, 1650 Broadway, at 51st Street, (212) 582-2121. The pianist in Coltrane's classic quartet will feature music from "McCoy Tyner Plays John Coltrane," his new album on Impulse/Universal. Dec. 25 to 30 at 8:30 and 10:30 p.m., with a third set Dec. 28 and 29 at midnight. Cover charge is \$30, Dec. 25 to 27; \$32.50, Dec. 28 to 30.

"A LOVE SUPREME: THE MUSIC OF JOHN COLTRANE," Alice Tully Hall, (212) 721-6500. The Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra, featuring Wynton Marsalis, will play Coltrane's larger orchestral pieces, including "Africa/Brass," with the saxophonist Pharoah Sanders as guest. A Jazz at Lincoln Center event. Feb. 14 and 16 at 8 p.m.; tickets are \$50.

JAZZ FOR YOUNG PEOPLE: "WHO IS JOHN COLTRANE?" Alice Tully Hall, (212) 721-6500. Wynton Marsalis and company will explain Coltrane's music for younger listeners. A Jazz at Lincoln Center event. Feb. 16 at 11 a.m. and 1 p.m.; tickets are \$15, \$10 for students.

Discussions

"SPEAKING OF TRANE," Kaplan Penthouse, Rose Building, 165 West 65th Street, Lincoln Center, (212) 721-6500. Rashied Ali, Coltrane's drummer, will discuss Coltrane's life and legacy with the journalist and social critic Stanley Crouch. A Jazz at Lincoln Center event. Feb. 12 at 7 p.m.; tickets are \$12.

Recordings

"TELL ME HOW LONG TRANE'S BEEN GONE." A five-hour radio program about Coltrane, produced by Steve Rowland and Culture Works, was recently broadcast on National Public Radio stations around the country. To be notified if the program becomes a CD, send your e-mail address to trane@artistowned.com.

"LEGACY." A four-disc retrospective of Coltrane's music, pulling together performances issued on different labels across his recording career and selected by Ravi Coltrane. To be issued by Impulse!/Universal in early 2002.

BEN RATLIF

PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF
HISTORIC PLACES

FOR PHC USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1. NAME

HISTORIC

John William Coltrane House

AND/OR COMMON

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER

1511 N. 33rd Street

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		<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mary Alexander

STREET AND NUMBER

1511 N. 33rd

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

STATE

P.A.

ZIPCODE

5. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Situate on the east side of Thirty-third Street at the distance of two-hundred-and-seventy-seven feet, three inches southward from the south side of Oxford Street in the Twenty-ninth Ward of the City of Philadelphia.

Containing in front or breadth on said Thirty-third Street sixteen feet and extending of that width in length or depth eastward between parallel lines at right angles with said Thirty-third Street on the north line thereof one-hundred-and-fifty-seven feet and three inches, and on the south line thereof one-hundred-forty-three feet and seven inches to a certain four feet wide alley leading northeastward into Natrona Street, and containing on the rear end thereof along said alley twenty-one feet, one-half inch.

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL STATE LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

1511 N. 33rd Street, the home of John William Coltrane, stands in a row of decorated three story rowhouses in the Strawberry Mansion section of North Philadelphia. Built of red brick, the house contains many of the design features typical for the area including a second floor bay and a spacious front porch. The row of houses is designed to alternate between two patterns, one with a rounded bay, three grouped arched windows on the third floor, and an italianate cornice. The second pattern, that of the Coltrane House, uses an angular bay, a Palladian third story window and a flemish gable roofline.

The first floor of the Coltrane House is spanned by a full width enclosed front porch. The base of the porch, built of brick, is pierced by an arched basement window. The deck, laid in wood, is reached by climbing four steps. The porch, continuous across the whole row, is covered by a shed roof with a pressed tin pediment, centered in front of each set of front doors. It is decorated with Colonial Revival details including doric columns, a denticulated cornice and a wreath set into the roof pediment. The entire front wall of the porch, resulting from its enclosure around 1900, is taken up with windows and doors. The front door, on the right side, contains three wooden panels and a glass panel in the upper portion. The door has side lights and a transom. The rest of the wall is composed of four large panels of glass topped by four smaller lights. The two central panels have been replaced with louvered windows.

The second and third floor is composed of a solid brick wall punctuated by windows. On the second floor three one-over-one sash windows wrap around a three sided pressed tin bay. A tripartite Palladian window lights the third floor. At the cornice line the building rises up to a Dutch, Renaissance Revival gable-end set against a title covered false mansard. The building has a flat roof.

The interior of the house has a single family plan and contains most of its original details. These include the entrance foyer with decorative tile floors and glazed tile wainscotting, numerous stained glass doors and windows and an open staircase with carved hewel posts and turned spindles.

The house remains in much the same condition as in the time when Mr. Coltrane inhabited the house.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

- PREHISTORIC
 - 1601-1700
 - 1701-1800
 - 1801-1850
 - 1851-1900
 - 1901-1950
 - 1951-
- ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC
 - ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC
 - AGRICULTURE
 - ARCHITECTURE
 - ART
 - COMMERCE
 - COMMUNICATIONS

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE - CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

- COMMUNITY PLANNING
- CONSERVATION
- ECONOMICS
- EDUCATION
- ENGINEERING
- EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
- INDUSTRY
- INVENTION
- LANDSCAPE
- ARCHITECTURE
- LAW
- LITERATURE
- MILITARY
- MUSIC
- PHILOSOPHY
- POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
- RELIGION
- SCIENCE
- SCULPTURE
- SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
- THEATER
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER (Specify) _____

SPECIFIC DATES Circa 1895

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The row house at 1511 N. 33rd Street is significant as the Philadelphia home of renowned jazz composer and performer, John William Coltrane, between 1952 and his death in 1967. Mr. Coltrane created a revolution in the jazz world during the 1960s with a new style of saxophone playing that at first shocked his audience and then went on to influence nearly every jazz musician since that time.

Born in Hamlet, North Carolina in 1926 Mr. Coltrane attended high school in High Point where he began his study of the saxophone, and then moved to Philadelphia where he received his musical training at the Ornstein School of Music and the Granoff studios. During WWII Coltrane played with the U.S. Navy band in Hawaii. Returning to Philadelphia after the war, he received his apprenticeship playing in various jazz clubs, in the bands of Eddie Vinson, Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonius Monk. He received his first big break in 1955 when he joined the Miles Davis Quintet known at the time as one of the finest jazz ensembles in the country. Within this group Coltrane emerged as an outstanding innovative performer. A critic in the Daily Pennsylvanian in 1959 wrote, "However pleasing may be the above mentioned five musicians, the most radically new and amazing member of the group is John Coltrane. First of all his style is the most complex tenor saxophone style yet devised. Coltrane thrives on substitution chords and relative keys taking advantage of every harmonic possibility that may appear in a given chord sequence. No saxophonist is so harmonically resourceful. Secondly, Coltrane has more techniques than any other saxophone player. He can execute with great facility the most difficult figures even in his "added" high register, which he obtains through false fingerings. Thirdly, Coltrane's lean but gutty tone fits well with his complicated rapid fire style. Fourthly, John Coltrane is having a revolutionary impact on jazz."

In 1960 John Coltrane formed his own group and continued to perform both live and on records. Mr. Coltrane greatly expanded the musical range of the tenor saxophone playing notes particularly at the high end of the scale in sharp staccato bursts. He developed musical devices such as "peddle point harmony", changing progressions, over a sustained bass note, multi-progressions, changing chords on every beat or second beat of a bar, and the use of the minor third and fourth as a basic chord progression. He also pioneered "modal music", improvising on a single scale, as opposed to chord progression.

With a change in the membership of his group in 1965 Mr. Coltrane who had

always been deeply religious, experimented with African and Indian religious music. This transition like Mr. Coltrane's first musical innovations alienated some of his listeners but also created a whole new audience. In the two years before his death Mr. Coltrane toured around the world, performing in Tokyo, Paris and London. Mr. Coltrane died in 1967 at the age of forty-two from a liver ailment. One of the most recorded musicians of all time, he lives on in the 37 albums that he cut during his short career and in the influence he still exerts on the jazz and rock music of today.

Mr. Coltrane bought the Victorian row house at 1511 N. 33rd Street in 1952 for \$5,416 to house; himself, his mother and his cousin. When he married, the couple lived in the house with the extended family. Even when Mr. Coltrane bought a new house close to New York to be at the center of the jazz scene, he still considered this house to be his home. The house is presently owned by his cousin and remains in much the same condition as when Mr. Coltrane lived there.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Daily Pennsylvanian - "Miles Ahead"; February 26, 1959.

Deeds

Kofsky, Frank; Black Nationalism and The Revolution in Music - Pathfinder Press, New York, New York 1970.

Thomas, J. C.; Coltrane, Chasin' The Trane - DaCapo Press, New York, New York.

10. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE

Randal Baron

ORGANIZATION

Philadelphia Historical Commission

STREET AND NUMBER

1313 City Hall Annex

CITY OR TOWN

Philadelphia

DATE

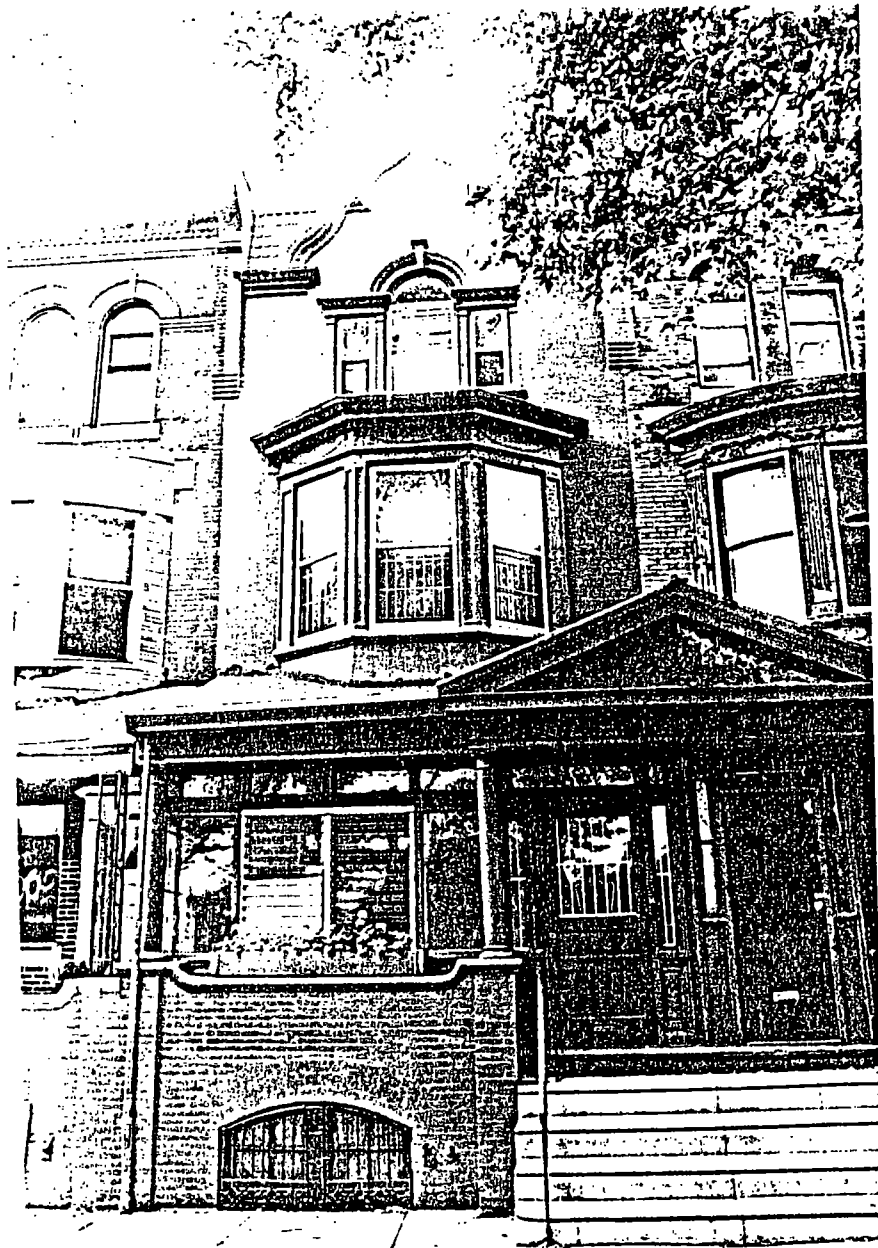
Sept. 23, 1985

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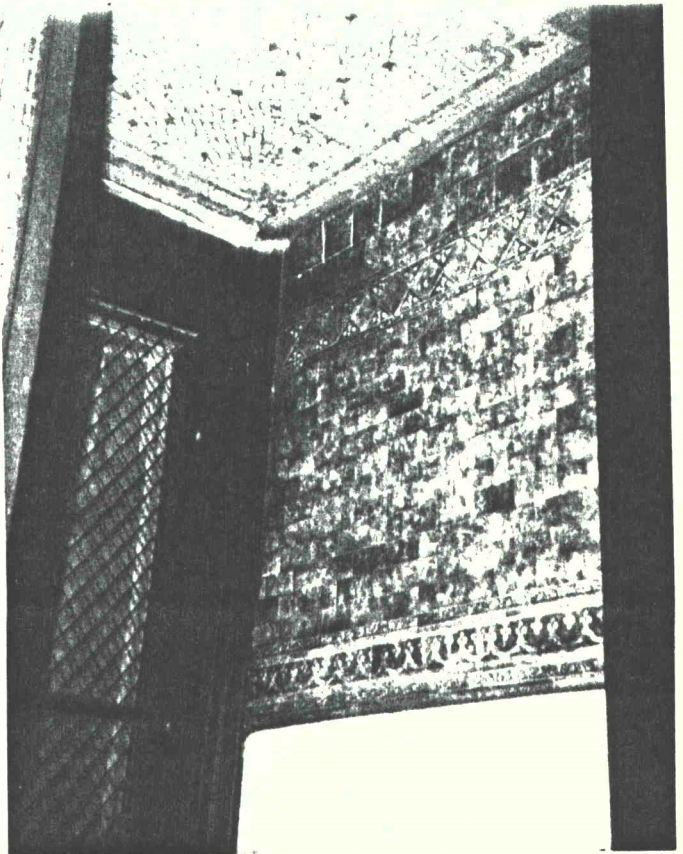
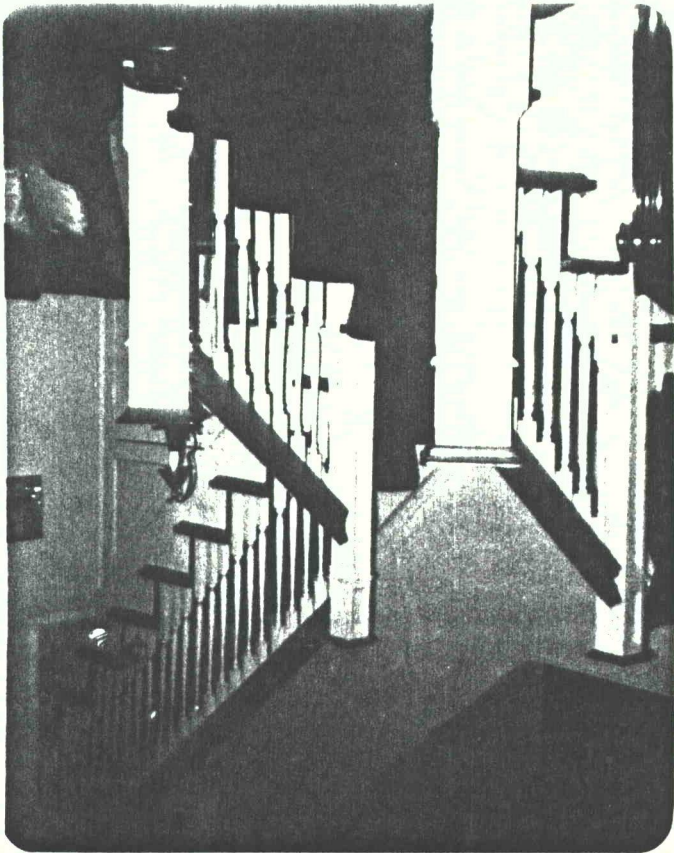
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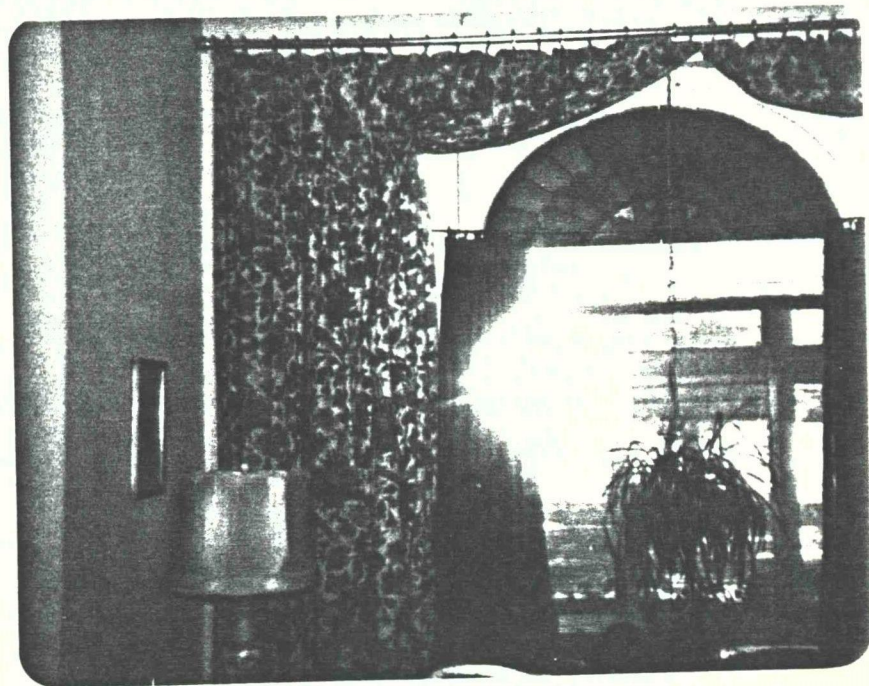
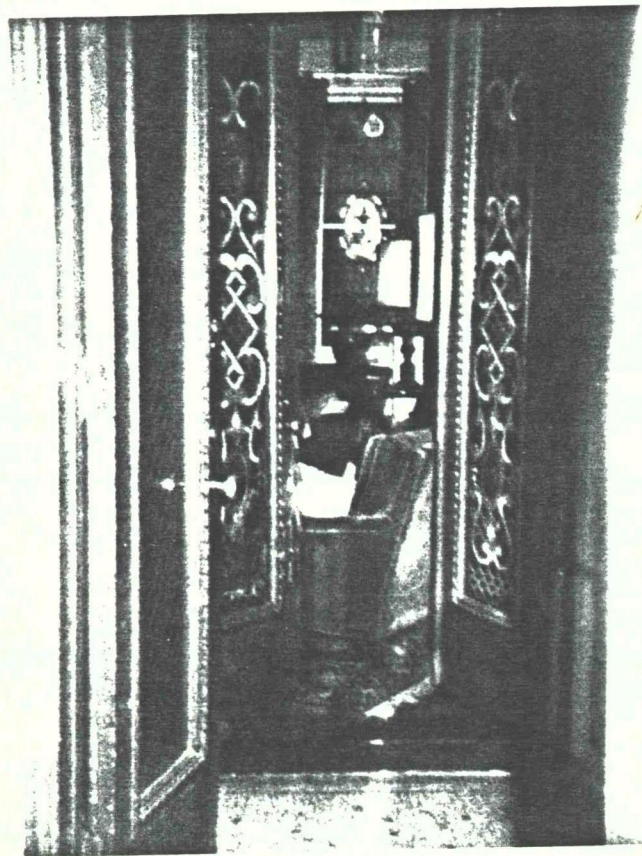
STATE

PA



John Coltrane House
1511 W. 33rd Street





1511 N 33rd St.

Sophie Stewart - 365-1656 (HW)

May Alexander - 703-1118

William

FC

175 Ave

1

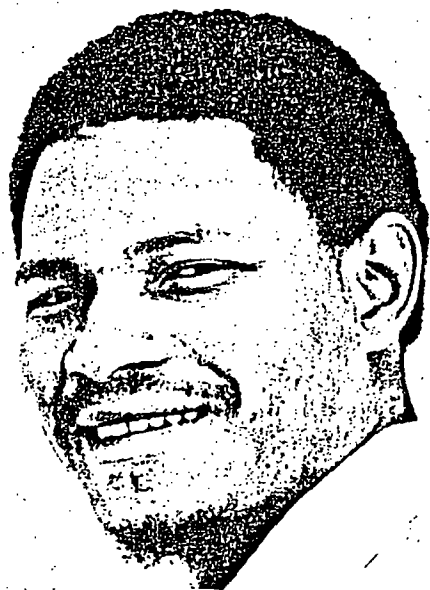
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Caplinger Books

Black Nationalism and the Revolution in Music



by Frank Kofsky



McCOY TYNER

Photo by Frank Kofsky



JOHN COLTRANE

Photo by Frank Kofsky

Chapter 12 JOHN COLTRANE: AN INTERVIEW

I am not a religious person, but John Coltrane was the one man whom I worshipped as a saint or even a god. I could never have written that when he was alive—if nothing else, it would have been too embarrassing for him had he read it. But since he is gone, no cause remains for denying it; and I feel that that tribute is the smallest gesture I can make toward acknowledging how much beauty and happiness he has brought into my life.

My veneration of John began, I think in the winter of 1958, when I first heard him on Miles Davis's *Round About Midnight* LP. I was immediately hypnotized and entranced by his sound. If familiarity is supposed to lead to contempt, the process worked just the opposite way in my love affair with Coltrane's music: the more I heard, the heavier was I hooked. Especially so with his later, post-1961 periods. Indeed, there have been times recently when one of the few things I could consistently rely on to convince me that life was worth the effort was the indomitably affirmative spirit that could be heard even in Coltrane's recordings. I'm sorry if that sentence reads like something by Nat Hentoff, but that is the way I felt, and Nat and everyone else will just have to bear with me for the resemblance.

Meeting John in the flesh not only did not tarnish his appeal for me, it enhanced it. I do not pretend I knew him well. I met him shortly after he formed his own quartet in 1961 to the best of my recollection, when he played his first West Coast engagement at San Francisco's *Jazz Workshop*. It had been arranged that he would do a benefit concert sponsored by the Students for Racial Equality at the University of California, the proceeds to go to the Student Nonviolent Coordinating

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Committee. The concert itself was never held—the then Chancellor Clark Kerr would not allow us to raise funds on campus for the use of organizations like SNCC, which meant that there was no point putting on the concert. (Later, the Free Speech Movement was able to mobilize the Berkeley campus around this issue; but in 1961 there was not that much concern.) Nonetheless, it had been a very real thrill for me (as liaison with Coltrane) to carry on even those few fragmentary and truncated conversations we had in the cubbyhole that passed for a dressing room in the *Workshop*.

I did my best to keep up the acquaintanceship in the years that followed. I moved to Los Angeles later in 1961, and whenever Coltrane played there—which wasn't often, due to the backwardness of the Los Angeles jazz audience—I made it a point to seek him out and exchange a few words with him. Poor man! How I now regret robbing him of those precious minutes that he liked to use for cat-napping between sets. But then I thought only of how I could manage to bask for a few extra moments in the presence of the Great Man himself.

In the summer of 1966 I was able to arrange for a two-week stay in New York to interview the leading musicians of the Jazz Revolution. The name that topped my list, of course, was that of John Coltrane. In spite of his crowded schedule, I was able to persuade John to allow me to question him, a triumph that left me glowing. The circumstances of that interview may help explain the affection I felt for John and why the closer one got to the man, the more one loved and respected him.

There was no earthly reason why he should have consented to be interviewed, especially since it involved a certain amount of inconvenience for him. First off, he had to drive thirty or forty minutes from his house to pick me up at the Deer Park station of the Long Island Railroad. Then, since there wasn't time for us to return to his home if I were to be on the afternoon train returning to New York, he sat with me in his station wagon for over an hour, sweltering in the August heat and humidity while we tape-recorded an interview in the parking lot of a local supermarket (part of our conversation is inaudible on the tape, owing to the rattling of the shopping carts). After the interview was over and John had returned me to the station, he insisted on waiting with me on the sunny platform until the next train back arrived. As we waited, he asked me about my political philosophy (we had talked during the interview about changing the world for the better).

He was thoughtful and attentive, when I told him I was a socialist and tried as best I could, given my nervous state, to explain the reason why. And then the train came.

That, however, was not the last of John's kindnesses to me. The next day I received a telephone call from Pharoah Sanders, saying that John had told him I was searching for him (as indeed I had been, fruitlessly, ever since my arrival in New York) to interview. And so an appointment with Pharoah was thus set up through the agency of John Coltrane.

I have never understood to this day why John went so far out of his way to assist a complete nonentity like myself. I can only surmise that, however much he may have had reservations about or outright disagreements with some of my ideas, he was convinced of my sincerity in working for a radical improvement in the human condition; and for that reason, if I am not mistaken, he put himself at my disposal. To say that his actions touched me would be the greatest understatement imaginable. But by then I appreciated that John Coltrane was unlike other men: his humility seemed to grow in proportion to his greatness, and I believe him the most *genuinely* modest man I have ever met. (Those younger followers who are so anxious to try and fill his shoes with their own considerably lesser talents would do well to emulate the master in this regard.) It was the combination of modesty and human warmth that overwhelmed me in talking to John and lent another whole dimension to my understanding of what he was saying in his music.

In the 1964 election, I wrote in the names of Malcolm X and John Coltrane for President and Vice-president. I mention this now only because I have been musing about it frequently in the days since John's passing. Then, I made that choice because those were the two greatest Americans I could think of. But now, I've begun to wonder if there isn't some hidden but nonetheless real connection between them. I think that there is. Both men perceived the ultimate reality about this country—the reality that you could know only if you were black and you were exposed at close quarters to the jazz club-narcotics-alcohol-mobster-ghetto milieu. Both men escaped being trapped in that milieu; both sought to use the lessons they had learned from it to show us not just the necessity for creating a society without ghettos of any sort, but also how to go about it; both, that is, exhorted us to make maximum use of our *human* potentialities, our reason and emotions. Neither was ever content with a static description of reality. Instead, both continually

brought their most treasured concepts, assumptions, and definitions under relentless scrutiny. When these proved inadequate or outmoded, so much the worse for them: once their shortcomings became apparent, they were discarded like yesterday's newspapers. Such was the compulsive honesty of these two giants, the total dedication to truth at any cost, that made Malcolm X and John Coltrane the charismatic figures they were and won for them their large following of young people, black and white alike. Though cut down in the prime of life with their work far from finished and their best years perhaps still in front of them, it is surely safe to say that their influence is just beginning to be felt.

I was not close enough to John Coltrane to expound on "what he would have liked us to do"; it would be a cheap trick unworthy of the reverence in which I hold him were I even to try. Possibly there are others who have this knowledge, I cannot say. What I can do is to tell you what he stands for in my mind and how I feel we can make use of his life to guide us, now that he is gone. More than anything else, I think of John as a man who could never sacrifice what he perceived as truth for mere expediency, no matter how advantageous this might have proved. He refused to accept a single set of ideas as final for all time; for him there was no orthodoxy or dogma that could not be challenged. He was ever trying to probe deeper inside himself, convinced that if he could reveal the essence of himself to his listeners, they would be moved to do the same, thus developing their creative faculties to the maximum. He therefore required absolute and total honesty of himself at all times; and though he sometimes worried about the unfavorable consequences that such a course would inevitably bring in its wake, the hesitations were momentary, the decision to push ahead, unalterable. If we are to be worthy of the music that he has left us, I do not see how we can do less than try to be as skeptical of what we are indoctrinated with as Truth and as demanding of ourselves as he was while he lived.

Kofsky: The first thing I want to ask you about is a story that somebody told me. The first night I came here, the people I was staying with have a friend, a young lady, and she was downtown at one of Malcolm X's speeches—and lo and behold, who should pop in on the seat next to her, but John Coltrane. [Laughter.] Right away, that whetted my curiosity,

and I wanted to know how many times you have seen him, what you thought of him, and so forth.

Coltrane: That was the only time.

Kofsky: Were you impressed by him?

Coltrane: Definitely. That was the only time. I thought I had to see the man, you know. I was living downtown, I was in the hotel, I saw the posters, and I realized that he was going to be over there so I said, well, I'm going over there and see this cat, because I had never seen him. I was quite impressed.

Kofsky: That was one of his last speeches, wasn't it?

Coltrane: Well, it was toward the end of his career.

Kofsky: Some musicians have said that there's a relationship between some of Malcolm's ideas and the music, especially the new music. Do you think there's anything in that?

Coltrane: Well, I think that music, being an expression of the human heart, or of the human being itself, does express just what *is* happening. I feel it expresses the whole thing—the whole of human experience at the particular time that it is being expressed.

Kofsky: What do you think about the phrase, *the new black music*, as a description of some of the newer styles in jazz?

Coltrane: Phrases, I don't know. They don't mean much to me, because usually I don't make the phrases, so I don't react too much. It makes no difference to me one way or the other what it's called.

Kofsky: If you did make the phrases, could you think of one?

Coltrane: I don't think there's a phrase for it, that I could make.

Kofsky: The people who use *that* phrase argue that jazz is particularly closely related to the black community and it's an expression of what's happening there. That's why I asked you about your reaction to Malcolm X.

Coltrane: Well, I think it's up to the individual musician, call it what you may, for any reason you may. Myself, I recognize the artist. I recognize an individual when I see his contribution; and when I know a man's sound, well, to me that's him, that's this man. That's the way I look at it. Labels, I don't bother with.

Kofsky: But it does seem to be a fact that most of the *changes* in the music—the innovations—have come from black musicians.

Coltrane: Yes, well this is how it is.

Kofsky: Have you ever noticed—since you've played all over

the United States and in all kinds of circumstances—have you ever noticed that the reaction of an audience varies or changes if it's a black audience or a white audience or a mixed audience? Have you ever noticed that the racial composition of the audience seems to determine how the people respond?

Coltrane: Well, sometimes, yes, and sometimes, no.

Kofsky: Any examples?

Coltrane: Sometimes it might appear to be one; you might say . . . it's hard to say, man. Sometimes people like it or don't like it, no matter what color they are.

Kofsky: You don't have any preferences yourself about what kind of an audience you play for?

Coltrane: Well, to me, it doesn't matter. I only hope that whoever is out there listening, they enjoy it; and if they're not enjoying it, I'd rather not hear.

Kofsky: If people do enjoy the music, how would you like them to demonstrate it? Do you like an audience that's perfectly still and unresponsive, or do you like an audience that reacts more visibly to the music?

Coltrane: Well, I guess I like an audience that does show what they feel; to respond.

Kofsky: I remember when you played at the *Jazz Workshop* in San Francisco, you sometimes got that kind of an audience, which you didn't get when you played at *Shelly's Manne-Hole* in Los Angeles; and it seemed to me that that had some effect on the music.

Coltrane: Yes, because it seems to me that the audience, in listening, is in an act of participation, you know. And when you know that somebody is maybe moved the same way you are, to such a degree or approaching the degree, it's just like having another member in the group.

Kofsky: Is that what happened at the *Ascension* date? The people that were there—did they get that involved?

Coltrane: I don't know. I was so doggone busy; I was worried to death. I couldn't really enjoy the date. If it hadn't been a date, then, I would have really enjoyed it. You know, I was trying to get the time and everything, and I was busy. I hope they felt something. To hear the record, I enjoyed it; I enjoyed all of the individual contributions.

Kofsky: What do you think, then, about playing concerts? Does that seem to inhibit the interaction between yourself, your group, and the audience?

Coltrane: Well, on concerts, the only thing that bugs me might be a hall with poor acoustics, where we can't quite get the

unit sound. But as far as the audience goes, it's about the same.

Kofsky: Another reason I asked you about Malcolm was because I've interviewed a number of musicians and the consensus seems to be that the younger musicians talk about the political issues and social issues that Malcolm talked about, when they're with each other. And some of them say that they try to express this in the music. Do you find in your own groups or among musicians you're friendly with that these issues are important and that you do talk about them?

Coltrane: Oh, they're definitely important; and as I said, the issues are part of what *is* at this time. So naturally, as musicians, we express whatever is.

Kofsky: Do you make a *conscious* attempt to express these things?

Coltrane: Well, I tell you for myself, I make a conscious attempt, I think I can truthfully say that in music I make or I have tried to make a conscious attempt to change what I've found, in music. In other words, I've tried to say, "Well, *this* I feel, could be better, in my opinion, so I will try to do this to make it better." This is what I feel that we feel in any situation that we find in our lives, when there's something we think could be better, we must make an effort to try and make it better. So it's the same socially, musically, politically, and in any department of our lives.

Kofsky: Most of the musicians I have talked to are very concerned about changing society and they do see their music as an instrument by which society can be changed.

Coltrane: Well, I think so. I think music is an instrument. It can create the initial thought patterns that can change the thinking of the people.

Kofsky: In particular, some of the people have said that jazz is opposed to poverty, to suffering, and to oppression; and therefore, that jazz is opposed to what the United States is doing in Vietnam. Do you have any comments on that subject?

Coltrane: On the Vietnam situation?

Kofsky: Well, you can divide it into two parts. The first part was whether you think jazz is opposed to poverty and suffering and oppression; and the second part is whether you think, if so, jazz is therefore opposed to the United States' involvement in Vietnam?

Coltrane: In my opinion I would say yes, because jazz—if you want to call it that; we'll talk about that later—to me, it is an expression of music; and this music is an expression of higher ideals, to me. So therefore, brotherhood is there;

and I believe with brotherhood, there would be no poverty. And also, with brotherhood, there would be no war.

Kofsky: That also seems to be what most of the musicians feel. David Izenson for example, said almost the same thing when I talked with him. He said, well, we're saying in our music we want a society without classes, without these frictions, without the wastes, and without the warfare.

Would you care to comment on working conditions for "jazz" musicians? Do you think that jazz artists are treated as they deserve to be treated; and if not, can you see any reason why they wouldn't be?

Coltrane: I don't know. It's according to the individual. Well, you find many times that a man may feel that the situation is all right with him, where another man might say, that situation is no good for you. So it's a matter of a man knowing himself, just what he wants, and that way, it's according to his value. If he doesn't mind a certain sort of treatment, I'm sure he can find it elsewhere. If he does mind it, then he doesn't have to put up with it. In my opinion, at this stage of the game, I don't care too much for playing clubs, particularly. Now there was a time when it felt all right to play clubs, because with my music, I felt I had to play a lot to work it out, you see. But now I don't think that that was absolutely where it was at; but I had to find it out myself. It is a matter of being able to be at home and be able to go into yourself. In other words, I don't feel the situation in clubs is ideal for me.

Kofsky: What is it about clubs that you don't like?

Coltrane: Well, actually, we don't play the set forty-minute kind of thing anymore, and it's difficult to always do this kind of thing now. The music, changing as it is, there are a lot of times when it doesn't make sense, man, to have somebody drop a glass, or somebody ask for some money right in the middle of Jimmy Garrison's solo. Do you know what I mean?

Kofsky: I know *exactly*.

Coltrane: And these kind of things are calling for some other kind of presentation.

Kofsky: In other words, these really are artists who are playing, yet they're really not being treated as artists, but as part of the cash register.

Coltrane: Yes, I think the music is rising, in my estimation, it's rising into something else, and so we'll have to find this kind of place to be played in.

Kofsky: Why do you think conditions have been so bad for

producing art by the musicians? What do you think causes these poor conditions that you've spoken of?

Coltrane: Well, I don't know; I don't really know how it came about. Because I do know there was one time when the musicians played more dances, and they used to play theatres and all; and this took away one element, you know, but still it was hard work. I remember some of those one-nighters, it was pretty difficult.

But it just seems that the music has been directed by businessmen, I would suppose, who know how to arrange the making of a dollar, and so forth. And maybe often the artist hasn't really taken the time himself to figure out just what he wants. Or if he does feel it should be in some other way. I think these are the things which are being thought about more now.

Kofsky: Do you think the fact that almost all of the original jazz musicians were black men and have continued to be throughout the generations, do you think this has encouraged the businessmen to take advantage of them and to treat their art with this contempt—ringing up of the cash register in the middle of a bass solo?

Coltrane: Well, I don't know.

Kofsky: Most of the owners, I've noticed, are white.

Coltrane: Well, it could be, Frank, it could be.

Kofsky: How do you think conditions are going to be improved for the musicians?

Coltrane: There has to be a lot of self-help, I believe. They have to work out their own problems in this area.

Kofsky: You mean, for example, what the Jazz Composers Guild was trying to do?

Coltrane: Yes, I *do* think that was a good idea, I really do; and I don't think it's dead. It was just something that couldn't be born at that time, but I still think it's a good idea.

Kofsky: This is true in the history of all kinds of organizations in this country—they're not always successful the first time. But I think it's inevitable that musicians are going to try and organize to protect themselves.

Coltrane: Yes.

Kofsky: For example, I was at the *Five Spot* Monday night, and I figure that there are about a hundred tables in there; and with two people at a table, it comes to about \$7.50 a set, and three drinks a set. That means the owner's making \$750, say, a set and he has five sets. And I know the musicians for that night aren't getting anywhere *near* five times \$750, or

even two times \$750. So actually it turns out that these businessmen are not only damaging the art, but they're even keeping people away.

Coltrane: Yes, it's putting them up tight, lots of people, man. I feel so *bad* sometimes about people coming to the club and I can't play long enough for them, because, you know, they're hustling you. They come to hear you play and you get up, you have to play a little bit, then split. Something has to be done about it.

Kofsky: Do the musicians who play in these newer styles look to Africa and Asia for some of their musical inspiration?

Coltrane: I think so; I think they look all over. And inside.

Kofsky: Do they look some places more than others? I heard you, for example, talking about making a trip to Africa, to gather musical sources. Is that the idea?

Coltrane: Well, I intend to make a trip to Africa to gather whatever I can find, particularly the musical sources.

Kofsky: Do you think that the musicians are more interested in Africa and Asia than in Europe, as far as the music goes?

Coltrane: Well, the musicians have been exposed to Europe, you see. So it's the other parts that they haven't been exposed to. Speaking for myself, at least, I'm trying to have a rounded education.

Kofsky: Is that the significance of those rhythmic instruments that you've incorporated into your group—to give it a sort of Middle Eastern or African flavor?

Coltrane: Maybe so, it's just something I feel.

Kofsky: Why do you think that the interest in Africa and Asia is growing at this particular time?

Coltrane: Well, it's just time for this to come about, that's all. It's a thing of the times.

Kofsky: Bill Dixon suggested to me that it might have something to do with the fact that many African nations became independent in the 1950s and changed the way Negroes in this country looked at themselves; it made them more aware of the African heritage and made them more interested in going back and looking for it. Do you think there's anything to that line of thought?

Coltrane: Yes, yes, that's part of it.

Kofsky: Another question along the same lines is: it seems that group improvisation is growing in importance—for example, what you do with Pharoah [Sanders] when you're playing simultaneously. And also, of course, *Ascension*. Do you

think that this is a new trend now, or not a new trend, but do you think this is growing in importance now?

Coltrane: Well, maybe. It seems to be happening at this time; I don't know how long it's going to last.

Kofsky: Why do you think that's taking place now?

Coltrane: I don't know *why*; it just *is*, that's all.

Kofsky: But it is there—I'm not making something up when I say that?

Coltrane: No, no, I feel it, it's there, but I don't know why.

Kofsky: And another question about the new music: I've noticed that a lot of the new groups are pianoless; or even in your case, where you have a piano, sometimes you'll have the piano lay out during a solo, or during parts of a solo. Why is this coming about at this particular time? Why the desire to deemphasize the piano or to give it another kind of role in the group?

Coltrane: I still use the piano, and I haven't reached the point where I feel I don't need it. I might, but . . . maybe it's because . . . well, when you're not playing on a given progression, you don't really need it to state these things. And it would get in your way to have somebody going in another direction and you trying to go in another, there it would be better for you not to have it.

Kofsky: It seems that the direction the horns are going in, too, is to get away from the twelve-tone scale—to play notes that really aren't on the piano: the high-pitched notes, the shrieks and screams. I don't know what words you use to describe those sounds, but I think you know what I mean. Sounds that were considered "wrong"—well, still are considered wrong by some people.

Now, if you play those notes that really aren't on the piano, and you have the piano there stating notes, do you feel that this gives some kind of a clash that you'd rather avoid?

Coltrane: I suppose that's the way some men feel about it. As I say, I still use the piano. I haven't reached the point yet, where the piano is a drag to me. The only thing is, I don't, we don't *follow* what the piano does any more, because we all move in our own directions. I like it for a backdrop, you know, for its sound.

Kofsky: You do have the piano, though, lay out for a fairly large part of the time.

Coltrane: Well, I always instruct the piano players that whenever they wish they can just lay out and let it go on as it

is. Because after a while, lots of times, the pianists, well, they get tired. If you can't think of anything else to play—stroll!

Kofsky: When I talked to you a couple of years ago in Los Angeles and I asked you if you would ever consider adding another horn to the group, you said probably the thing you would do is, if you added anything you would add drums. [Laughter.] Did you have in mind then these kind of things that . . . ?

Coltrane: I don't even know, man, but I guess so. I still feel so strongly about drums, I really do. I feel very strongly about these drums. I experimented in it, but we didn't have too much success. I believe it would have worked, but, Elvin and McCoy [unintelligible].

Kofsky: It doesn't necessarily have to be two drums. It could be drums and another rhythm instrument. That's what I was really referring to.

Coltrane: I think so too. It could come in different forms, shapes; I just don't know how to do it, though.

Kofsky: After all, the things that you're using in the group now—shakers, bells, maracas—are rhythm instruments too. Not all rhythm instruments are drums.

Coltrane: Oh, that's true.

Kofsky: That's what I meant, when I asked you if that's what you had in mind.

Coltrane: Yes.

Kofsky: Speaking of Elvin and McCoy reminds me of something Sun Ra said, and I'll repeat it. I'll make it clear that I don't put any faith in it, but since he said it, and he told me to tell you, I'll pass it along.

He says that you hired Rasheld All as a means of driving Elvin and McCoy out of the band, because you didn't want them in the band in the first place, and that was your way of doing it. Do you want to answer that?

Coltrane: No, I don't. I was trying to do something. . . . There was a thing I wanted to do in music, see, and I figured I could do *two* things: I could have a band that played like the way we used to play, and a band that was going in the direction that the one I have now is going in—I could combine these two, with these two concepts going. And it could have been done.

Kofsky: Yes. Sun Ra is quite bitter, and claims that you've stolen all of your ideas from him, and in fact that everybody has stolen all of their ideas from him. [Laughter.]

Coltrane: There may be something to that. I've heard him

and I know that he's doing some of the things that I've wanted to do.

Kofsky: How do you feel about having another horn in the group, another saxophone? Do you feel that it in any way competes with you or that it enhances what you're doing?

Coltrane: Well, it helps me. It helps me stay alive sometimes, because physically, man, the pace I've been leading has been so hard and I've gained so much weight, that sometimes it's been a little hard physically. I feel that I like to have somebody there in case I can't get that strength. I like to have that strength in that band, somewhere. And Pharoah is very strong in spirit and will, see, and these are the things that I like to have up there.

Kofsky: Do you feel that spurs you on, the presence especially of a man as powerful as Pharoah?

Coltrane: Yes, all the time, there's always got to be somebody with a lot of power. In the old band, Elvin had this power. I always have to have somebody there, with it, you know?

Rasheld has it, but it hasn't quite unfolded completely; all he needs to do is play.

Kofsky: That was my impression, too, that he really was feeling his way ahead in the music and didn't have the confidence Elvin had. But then, of course, look how long Elvin was with you before—

Coltrane: He was there, Elvin was there for a couple of years—although Elvin was ready from the first time I heard him, you know, I could hear the genius there—but he had to start playing steadily, steadily, every night. . . . With Miles [Davis] it took me around two and a half years, I think, before it started developing, taking the shape that it was going to take.

Kofsky: That's what's so tragic about the situation of the younger musicians now: they don't have that opportunity to play together.

Coltrane: Yes, it certainly needs to be done. It should be happening all the time and the men would develop sooner.

Kofsky: Don Cherry has a record out, *Complete Communion*. I think it's a beautiful record, and one of the reasons I think it's so good is because here he has a group that's worked together for a few months.

Coltrane: Yeah!

Kofsky: And so he knows how to put something together for all the men—it isn't just a "date."

Have you listened to many of the other younger saxophonists besides Pharoah?

Coltrane: Yes, Albert Ayler first. I've listened very closely to him. He's something else.

Kofsky: Could you see any relationship between what you were doing and what he was doing? In other words, do you think he has developed out of some of your ideas?

Coltrane: Not necessarily; I think what he's doing, it seems to be moving music into even higher frequencies. Maybe where I left off, maybe where he started, or something.

Kofsky: Well, in a sense, that's what I meant.

Coltrane: Yes. Not to say that he would copy bits and that, but just that he filled an area that it seems I hadn't gotten to.

Kofsky: It seems to me, that your solo on *Chasin' the Trane*, that Albert developed some of the ideas that you had put out there and he had expressed some of them in his own ways, and that this was one of the points from which he had begun. Had you ever thought of it in that light?

Coltrane: No. I hadn't.

Kofsky: Did you ever listen to that selection much?

Coltrane: Only at the time it came out, I used to listen to it and wonder what happened to me.

Kofsky: What do you mean?

Coltrane: Well, it's a sort of surprising thing to hear this back, because—I don't know, it came back another way.

It was a little longer than I thought it was and it had a fairly good amount of intensity in it, which I hadn't quite gotten into a recording before.

Kofsky: You were pleased with it?

Coltrane: To a degree, not that I could sit there with it and love it forever.

Kofsky: Well, no, you'd never be pleased with anything that you did for longer than a week!

Coltrane: I realized that I'd have to do that or better, you see, and then I—

Kofsky: I think it's a remarkable record and I also think you ought to go back and listen to it.

Coltrane: Maybe so.

Kofsky: Because I don't see any saxophonist now who isn't playing something that you haven't at least sketched out before. But maybe you would rather not think about that.

Coltrane: No, because like it's a big reservoir, that we all dip out of. And a lot of times, you'll find that a lot of those

things . . . I listened to John Gilmore kind of closely before I made *Chasin' the Trane*, too. So some of those things on there are really direct influences of listening to this cat, you see. But then I don't know who he'd been listening to, so . . .

Kofsky: After *Chasin' The Trane* and then *Impressions* came out, you did a sort of change of pace. You remember; you did the album with Duke Ellington and *Ballads*, and the Johnny Hartman album. Whose idea were these albums? Were they yours, or Bob Thiele's?

Coltrane: Well, I tell you, I had some trouble at that time. I did a foolish thing. I got dissatisfied with my mouthpiece and I had some work done on this thing, and instead of making it better, it ruined it. It really discouraged me a little bit, because there were certain aspects of playing—that certain fast thing that I was reaching for—that I couldn't get because I had damaged this thing, so I just had to curtail it. Actually, I never found another [mouthpiece], but after so much of this laying around and making these kind of things, I said, well what the hell, I might as well go ahead and do the best I can. But at that moment, it was so vivid in my mind—the difference in what I was getting on the horn—it was so vivid that I couldn't do it. Because as soon as I did, I'd hear it; and it just discouraged me. But after a year or so passed, well, I'd forgotten.

Kofsky: That's funny, because I think I know your music as thoroughly as any nonmusician, yet that wouldn't have been apparent to me.

Coltrane: That's a funny thing. That's one of the mysteries. And to me, as soon as I put that horn in my mouth, I could hear it. It feels, you know. . . I just stopped and went into other things.

Kofsky: The reason I asked that was because I recall that was the time you had Eric [Dolphy] in and out of the band.

Coltrane: Yes.

Kofsky: And there was a whole wave of really hostile criticism.

Coltrane: Yes, and all of this was at the same time, so you see how it was. I needed all the strength I could have at that time; and maybe some of these things might have caused me to feel, "Well, man, I can't get what I want out of this mouthpiece, so I'll work on it."

Kofsky: You think this might have undermined your self-confidence?

Coltrane: It could have, it certainly could have.

Kofsky: Why do you think there's been all this hostility to the new music, especially in your case?

Coltrane: Oh, man, I never could figure it out! I couldn't even venture to answer it now. Because as I told them then, I just felt that they didn't understand.

Kofsky: Do you think they were making as conscientious and thorough an attempt to understand as they could have?

Coltrane: At the time I didn't feel they were, because I did offer them, in an article in *Down Beat*, that if any of you men were interested in trying to understand, let's get together and let's talk about it, you know? I thought if they were really genuinely interested or felt there was something here, that instead of just condemning what you don't know about, if you want to discuss it, let's talk about it. But no one ever came forth, so I don't think they wanted to know what I had to say about it. [Laughter.]

Kofsky: I think it frightened them. Bill Dixon and I talked about this at great length; and he said: "Well, these guys, it's taken them years to pick out *I Got Rhythm* on the piano." and now the new music comes along and undermines their entire career, which is built around understanding things based on those patterns.

Coltrane: Yes, I dug it like that too. I said, "Well, this could be a real drag to a cat if he figures this is something that he won't be able to cope with and he won't be able to write about." If he can't write about it he can't make a living at this; and then I realized that, so I quieted down. I wouldn't allow myself to become too hostile in return. Although there was a time I kind of froze up on those people at *Down Beat*. I felt that there was something there that wasn't—I felt that that they were letting their weakness direct their actions, which I didn't feel they should have. The test, was for me. They could do what they wanted to do. The thing was for me to remain firm in what I was doing. That was a funny period in my life, because I went through quite a few changes, you know, like home life—everything, man, I just went through so many . . . everything I was doing.

Kofsky: The perfect wrong time to hit you!

Coltrane: Everything I was doing was like that, it was a hell of a test for me, and it was coming out of it, it was just like I always said, man: when you go through these crises and you come out of them, you're definitely stronger, in a great sense.

Kofsky: Did the reaction of Impulse to these adverse criticisms have anything to do with those records that we talked about?

Coltrane: The ballads and that?

Kofsky: Yes.

Coltrane: Well, I don't know. I think Impulse was interested in having what they might call a balanced sort of thing, a diversified sort of catalog, and I find nothing wrong with this myself. You see, I like—in fact most of the songs that I even write now, the ones that I even consider songs, are ballads. So there's something there, that I mean I really love these things.

And these ballads that came out were definitely ones which I felt at this time. I chose them; it seemed to be something that was laying around in my mind—from my youth, or somewhere—and I just had to do them. They came at this time, when the confidence in what I was doing on the horn had flagged, it seemed to be the time to clean that out. And Johnny Hartman—a man that I had stuck up in my mind somewhere—I just felt something about him, I don't know what it was. I liked his sound, I thought there was something there I had to hear, so I looked him up and did that album. Really, I don't regret doing those things at all.

The only thing I regret was not having kept that same attitude, which was: I'm going to do, no matter what. That was the attitude in the beginning, but as I say, there were a whole lot of reasons why these things happened.

Kofsky: Do you think that learning how to play the soprano changed your style?

Coltrane: Definitely, definitely. It certainly did.

Kofsky: How so? Could you spell it out?

Coltrane: Well, the soprano, by being this small instrument, I found that playing the lowest note on it was like playing one of the middle notes on the tenor—so therefore, after I got so that my embouchure would allow me to make the upper notes, I found that I would play *all over* this instrument. On tenor, I hadn't always played all over it, because I was playing certain ideas which just went in certain ranges, octaves. But by playing on the soprano and becoming accustomed to playing on tenor from that low B-flat on up, it soon got so that when I went to tenor, I found myself doing the same thing. It caused the change or the willingness to change and just try to play as much of the instrument as possible.

Kofsky: Did it give you a new rhythmic conception too?

Coltrane: I think so, I think so. A new shape came out of this thing and patterns—the way the patterns—would fall.

Kofsky: It seemed to me that after you started playing soprano, and particularly after *My Favorite Things*, then you started feeling that same kind of a pulse on the tenor that hadn't been there in your work before.

Coltrane: I think that's quite possible. In fact, the patterns started—the patterns were one of the things I started getting dissatisfied with on the tenor mouthpiece, because the sound of the soprano was actually so much closer to me in my ear. There's something about the presence of that sound, that to me—I didn't want to admit it—but to me it would seem like it was better than the tenor—I liked it more. I didn't want to admit this damn thing, because I said the tenor's my horn, it is my favorite. But this soprano, maybe it's just the fact that it's a higher instrument, it started pulling my conception.

Kofsky: How do you feel about the two horns now?

Coltrane: Well, the tenor is the power horn, definitely; but soprano, there's still something there in just the voice of it that's really beautiful, something that I really like.

Kofsky: Do you regard the soprano as an extension of the tenor?

Coltrane: Well, at first I did, but now, it's another voice, it's another sound.

Kofsky: Did you ever use the two horns on the same piece, as you did on *Spiritual*?¹

Coltrane: I think that's the only time I've done that. Sometimes in clubs, if I feel good, I might do something like this—start on one and end on another—but I think that's the only one on record.

Kofsky: What prompted Pharoah to take up the alto? Was that to get away from—two tenors?

Coltrane: I don't know. This is something he wanted to do, and about the same time I decided I wanted to get one, so we both got one.

Kofsky: I haven't heard you play the alto. Do you play it much?

Coltrane: I played it in Japan. I played it in Frisco a little bit, but I've had a little trouble with the intonation of it. It's a Japanese make, it's a new thing they're trying out, so they gave us these horns to try, and mine has to be adjusted at certain points where it's not quite in tune, so I don't play it, but I like it.

Kofsky: I saw a picture of you with a *flute!* Are you playing that too now?

Coltrane: I'm learning.

Kofsky: You're always learning, aren't you?

Coltrane: I hope so. Always trying to learn.

Kofsky: I looked at the *Down Beat* and *Jazz Critics Polls* two years in a row, and both years, this and last year, I noticed that European critics are much more in favor of the new music than the Americans. Almost 50 percent or 60 percent of them would vote for new musicians, whereas, say only about a quarter of the Americans. Is this what you found in Europe?—or in general, have you found outside the United States that your music is more favorably received by the critics, the power structure, shall we say, than in the U. S.?

Coltrane: I'd say in the new music—and when I say new music, I mean most of the younger musicians that are starting out—I know that they definitely have found a quicker acceptance in Europe than they have here. When I started, it was a little different, because I started through Miles Davis, who was an accepted musician, and they got used to me here in the States. Now when they first heard me with Miles here, they did not like it.

Kofsky: I remember.

Coltrane: So it's just one of those things: everything that they haven't heard yet and that's a little different, they are going to reject it at first. But the time will roll around, the time when they will like it. Now, by being here with Miles and running around the country with him, they heard more of me here, and consequently they began to accept it before they did in Europe, because they hadn't heard me in Europe. When we went to Europe the first time, it was a shock to them there. They booed me and everything in Paris, because they just weren't with it. But now I find, the last time I was in Europe, it seems that the new music—they've really opened up. They can hear it there better than they do here.

Kofsky: I think that part of this is because what's happening in the new music is analogous to what's happened in painting, say, and sculpture and literature; and the people who appreciate jazz in Europe, are much more aware of this. What do you think of this?

Coltrane: Well, I don't know.

Kofsky: In Europe, jazz is regarded as a serious art, whereas here, it's regarded as, well . . .