

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Historic Downtown Hartford

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page 18

Batterson Block  
26-28 High Street

c. 1860  
Photograph 2  
Building #14

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DEC 23 1984

Description

The Batterson Block was constructed as a 45 x 90-foot, 4-story, brick-and-granite building on the east side of High Street, close to Asylum Street. At an unknown date a fifth floor was added. Chief architectural interest in the building arises from its front elevation which is designed in the High Victorian Gothic style.

The use of polychromy in the building was in accordance with High Victorian practices. The arches of the second and third floors express the polychromy in the alternating red brick and white granite voussoirs and in the granite moldings that outline the arches against the brick walls. The granite string courses at the spring lines of the arches is a continuation of this effect. The granite surround of the first story is a further contrast with the brick, while the columns of polished granite in variegated shades add another color and texture.

Gothic elements in the design include the arches themselves which are almost pointed, the elaborate foliate capitals of the columns and the quatrefoil band at the cornices. This band extends along the side elevations and is the only decorative element from the front elevation to do so.

There is a Romanesque feature in the round arches of the windows themselves and the way they are grouped and divided. At the first floor is a 5-arch arcade, at the second and third floors a single window is flanked by pairs and at the fourth floor is an arcade of seven smaller windows. In all cases adjoining windows are divided by an engaged, polished granite column. The heights of the columns diminish in the upper floors. A final Romanesque motif is the corbeled machicolation below the cornice.

Significance - Criterion C, Architecture

The Batterson Block is unique in Historic Downtown Hartford for its combination of elements from the High Victorian Gothic and High Victorian Romanesque styles. The unknown architect combined these features in an unusual but successful manner that today is substantially unaltered except for the addition of the fifth floor. The facade is an outstanding statement of the Victorian era.

In some ways the Batterson Block is a forerunner of later work in the Romanesque Revival style by H. H. Richardson and others. The reduction in size but increase in number of windows at the higher stories became standard practice. The height of the columns was diminished in the process leading later to columns of exaggerated shortness.

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The structure was one a growing number of business blocks on mid-19th century. James G. Batterson (1823-1901) who owned the building, and others, was a leading citizen of the Hartford business community. He began his business career as proprietor of a stone yard, expanded into the production of Civil War monuments, was contractor for the construction of the Connecticut State Capitol and the Library of Congress and founded the Travelers Insurance Company, which dominates Main Street Historic District #2.

Geographical Data

Acreage: Less than one acre

UTM Reference: 18/692800/4626400

Boundary: City map No. 12, parcel No. 26164