

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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received : FEB 25 1983

date entered

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

## 1. Name

historic COLONY'S BLOCK

and/or common COLONY'S BLOCK

## 2. Location

street & number 4-7 Central Square not for publication

city, town Keene vicinity of ~~congressional district~~ (2nd)

state N.H. code 33 county Cheshire code 005

## 3. Classification

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

## 4. Owner of Property

name Housing Resources Corporation & Keene Downtown Housing Corporation\*

street & number One Canal Plaza, PO Box #387 / City Hall, Keene, N.H. 03431\*

city, town Portland vicinity of state Maine 04112

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cheshire County Courthouse/Registry of Deeds

street & number 12 Court Street

city, town Keene state New Hampshire

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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## 7. Description

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<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>n/a</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

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### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Colony Block is a five-story, French Second Empire commercial block, the most imposing of the several Victorian masonry structures along Central Square in Keene, NH. Originally one of a pair of contiguous, nearly identical buildings (with the Cheshire Provident Institution for Savings) built after an 1865 fire, the Colony Block facade is dominated by a Mansard roof of blue, green and red Vermont slate in three different variations of the Second Empire style. These culminate the three vertical divisions of the brick facade itself, with a slightly wider recessed central section four bays across flanked by three-bay pavilions projecting from the plane of the center section. The ground floor facade is composed of three shopfronts, each with an inset doorway between plate glass show windows, as well as an inset entranceway to the upper floors located between the southernmost shop (now Johnson's Drug) and the center store. These store fronts were modified in 1934. The original store fronts did not have recessed entries.

The upper floors and roofs within the three major divisions of the facade are each elaborated with different fenestration and decorative embellishments. The three bays of the northern section of the second floor contain identical arched windows in recessed brick arches separated by piers with sandstone capitals supporting the brick arch with central and side keystones. The four second floor windows of the central section each contain a double hung window of 2 over 2 sash beneath a projecting, brick threepoint arch with raised keystone. The second story of the three southern bays contains a wide 2 over 1 central window flanked by narrow 1 over 1 windows. These are capped by projecting round arches with horizontal ears and a keystone, while the central window is a projecting three point brick arch connecting with the ears of the side window caps and an identical keystone. A horizontal band of sandstone separates the second and third floors at a point which once a balcony projected from the center windows of each of the third floor corner projections. Only the supports survive today, those on the southern side being sandstone brackets.

The third and fourth story of the north section are divided into three bays by brick piers and the slight protrusion of the central and wider bay. The third story has three flat arched windows of 1 over 1 sash, with sandstone banding between projecting window caps and sandstone keys. The fourth floor above has four arched windows, two in the central bay with keystones and a sandstone band at sill level which continues across the whole facade. The third floor of the central section has four 2 over 2 sash windows with flat arches beneath projecting sandstone square side caps connecting like a Greek key and a central bracket and rosette above each window. The fourth story above has two groups of three narrower 1 over 1 sash with angular sandstone caps. The third floor of the southern section has four arched 1 over 1 sash, the two center windows are paired and share a common round arch cap with narrow keystone joined by horizontal ears to the smaller arched sandstone caps of the side windows. The fourth floor above this section has five narrow 1 over 1 sash arched windows recessed between corner brick piers. The cornice across all three sections is marked by a sandstone band across the facade with single brackets over the four piers of the north section and paired brackets over the two southern piers. The three roof sections are equally different.

-see Continuation Sheet #1

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Continuation sheet #1 - DESCRIPTION

Item number 7

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The north is a straight sided Mansard projection across the three bays with diamond slate patters, a 2 over 2 arched sash window in the center and smaller flanking 1 over 1 sash windows with slightly rounded hoods. The middle section is a nearly vertical recessed plain blue slate roof with a three-part dormer with a taller 2 over 2 sash center window with gabled hood flanked by a lower 2 over 2 sash window on each side under hipped roof and with side volutes. The southern roof has two shorter round arched windows flanking a wider and taller window with gabled hood and pointed surround. Banding of slate parallels the rise and fall of the center window. This Mansard projecting roof is curved on its northern edge and square along the original party wall; the arch of the roof was probably mirrored on the bank to the south originally. Behind the facade the roof forms a flat shed to the rear.

The side walls are party walls, that on the south exposing the scars of the removed fourth story of the bank and the brick chimney flues. Behind, the building is narrower, due to the angle of the property line, forming three bays divided by 2" interior load bearing brick walls. The rear has evenly spaced fenestration with sash windows beneath flat brick arches. An added series of wooden porches cover the rear facade, although they are now in much decayed condition.

## 8. Significance

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

**Specific dates** 1870

**Builder/Architect** J.M. Buzzell/Builder &

Elbridge Boyden/Architect

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

Central Square is the traditional commercial and social hub of Keene and the Colony Block is the most prominent commercial block along the east side of the Square. Designed in 1870 by the prominent Worcester, Massachusetts architect Elbridge Boyden, the Colony Block replaced the Cheshire Mill store that burned with much of the street in 1865. The owner, Timothy Colony, was a prominent Keene businessman who was Treasurer of the Cheshire Mills in Harrisville, New Hampshire. The building housed not only retail clothing and drug stores, but also the first Keene Public Library.

Architecture: The Colony Block is significant as the best commercial French Second Empire commercial block in Keene. It was designed by Elbridge Boyden, architect of Worcester, Massachusetts, who is perhaps best known for the Mechanic's Hall in that city. He designed not only the Colony and the adjacent Cheshire Bank blocks, but was familiar in Keene from his remodeling of the First Congregational Church in 1860.<sup>1</sup> The contractor for the Colony Block was J.M. Buzzell who also built the Brooks Hotel and a block of stores in Brattleboro, Vermont.<sup>2</sup> The finished Colony Block was a virtual vocabulary of the Second Empire, making use of a wide range of decorative sandstone bandings, Gothic and Romanesque arches and a variety of window caps and decorative gables in the slate roof. Tolles has called the building "the most imposing structure" on Central Square and "remarkable in displaying a different version of the French Second Empire style on each of the three divisions of its facade."<sup>3</sup>

Commerce: The site of the Colony Block has long been the commercial center of Keene. In 1859 Henry and Alfred T. Colony built the Cheshire Mills store on this site.<sup>4</sup> The Cheshire Mills of Harrisville, NH (a National Historic Landmark) were originally built by Cyrus Harris, but purchased in 1850 by the firm of Colony and Faulkner, a long-established woolen manufacturing company since founded in 1815 by Josiah Colony and Charles S. Faulkner of Keene. The firm included Josiah Colony's sons, Henry and Timothy. The latter became Treasurer of the Cheshire Mills after his father relinquished control of the company in 1852.<sup>5</sup> Timothy Colony (1784-1882), the builder of the Colony Block, remained one of the prominent members of the Colony family of Keene. While the Italianate Bridgeman Block to the north was erected in 1866 when Timothy (who purchased the Cheshire Mills Store from his brothers in that year) signed a party wall agreement, he did not commence construction until 1870.<sup>6</sup> When completed, its shops were rented to Patterson & Co. (ladies goods), Willard & Co. (men's clothing) and Muchmore and Co. (drugs). The stores were described by contemporaries as "simply elegant" and the soda fountain of the drug store elicited special notice.<sup>7</sup> The drugstore has continuously occupied the site, under George Kelly in 1874, Appleton & Co. in 1877, George Sawyer in 1881 and Johnson's Drug since 1918.

-see Continuation Sheet #2

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

1. Bryant F. Tolles, Jr. New Hampshire Architecture, pp. 141-2; original architectural drawings in possession of former owner John Colony.
2. New Hampshire Sentinel, February, 1971.
3. John B. Armstrong, Factory Under the Elms, A History of Harrisville, N.H. 1774-1969 (MIT, Cambridge, 1972).

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .15

Quadrangle name KEENE, N.H. -VT.

Quadrangle scale 1:62500

### UMT References

A 

1	9	7	2	2	1	5	0	4	7	5	6	8	7	5
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing					

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing					

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing					

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing					

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing					

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing					

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing					

### Verbal boundary description and justification

- see Continuation Sheet #3

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

state	n/a	code	county	code

state	n/a	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cynthia J. Milliken & Dr. Richard Candee, Consultant\*

organization Housing Resources Corporation date October 18, 1982

street & number One Canal Plaza, PO Box #387 telephone 207-774-6989

city or town Portland state Maine 04112

Kittery\* state Maine 03904\*

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

Commissioner, NH Dept. of Resources & Economic Development  
 title NH State Historic Preservation Officer date February 8, 1983

### For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register date 3/24/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet #2 - SIGNIFICANCE

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Education: The second story of the Colony Block was rented to the Keene Public Library. Founded by a group of private citizens as a social library in 1859, the library was taken over as a public function of the city two years after achieving a city charter in 1873. The 3,000 volume library remained in the Colony Block from 1870 to 1877, when it was moved to a new location.<sup>6</sup> In 1899, the library again moved, this time to the 1869 Henry Colony house, built by Timothy Colony's brother, where it remains as the Thayer Library.<sup>9</sup>

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1  
Bryant F. Tolles, Jr. New Hampshire Architecture, pp 141-2; original architectural drawings in the possession of former owner, John Colony.

2  
New Hampshire Sentinel, Feb. 2, 1871.

3  
Tolles, p. 142.

4  
The Repertory (1925), vol. 1, no. 11.

5  
John B. Armstrong, Factory Under the Elms, A History of Harrisville, N.H. 1774-1969 (MIT, Cambridge, 1972), pp. 29-35.

6  
Cheshire Deeds.

7  
New Hampshire Sentinel, April 1871; June 8, 1871.

8  
Keene City Directory, 1871, 1878.

9  
Tolles, p. 143.

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Continuation sheet #3 - GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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Verbal boundary description:

Situated on the eastern side of Washington Street in Central Square at the northwest corner of the Bridgeman Block following a southerly line 63.7 feet to the southwest of the Colony Block which abutts the northwest corner of the Cheshire County Savings Bank; then from said point following the party wall between the Colony Block and the Cheshire County Savings Bank the boundary line terminates at the northeast corner of the Cheshire County Savings Bank; then turning 90° to follow an easterly boundary 27.1 feet to the northeast corner of the Colony Block property; then following the center partition of the Bridgeman Block this party wall extension 98.45 feet to the northwest corner of the Colony Block on Central Square.

Keene Tax Map #17; parcel #11; section #7.

Justification: The nominated property consists of the building proper as there are no extant lands or buildings associated with the Colony Block.

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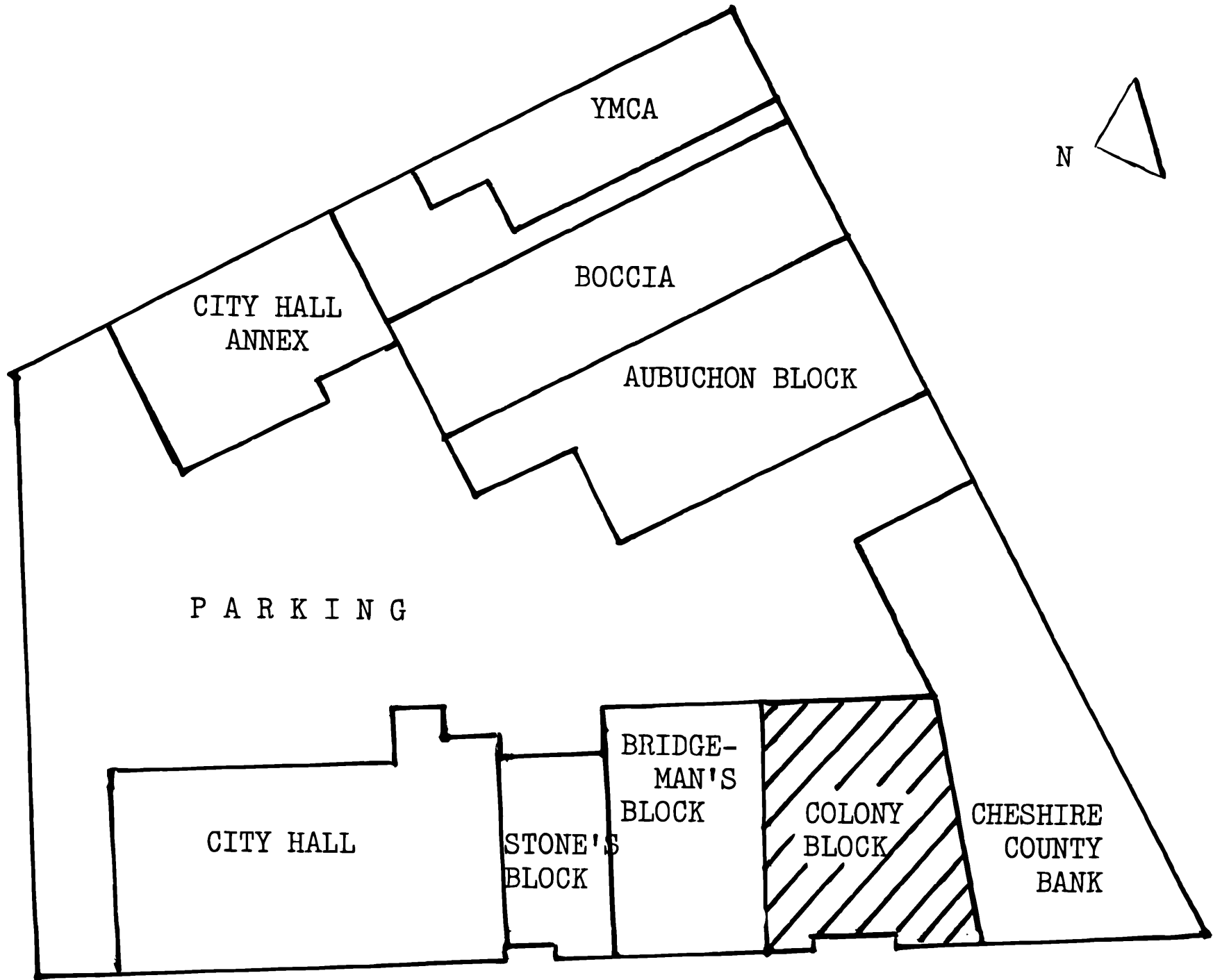
Continuation sheet #4 - ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION


Item number --

Page 1

COLONY'S BLOCK/KEENE, NH  
SKETCH MAP

Approx. Scale: 1" = 65'



 - Colony Block, 4-7 Central Square, Keene, N.H.  
Keene Tax Map #17; parcel #11; section #7.