

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Bristol	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	APR 24 1973

1. NAME

COMMON:  
Bristol Historical and Preservation Society

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Bristol County Jail

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:  
48 Court Street

CITY OR TOWN:  
Bristol

STATE: Rhode Island, 02809      CODE: 44      COUNTY: Bristol      CODE: 001

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <u>Historical</u> <u>library</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____			

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations

STREET AND NUMBER:  
State House, 90 Smith Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence      STATE: Rhode Island, 02903      CODE: 44

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Bristol Town Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:  
10 Court Street

CITY OR TOWN: Bristol      STATE: Rhode Island, 02809      CODE: 44

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Statewide Survey of Historic Buildings

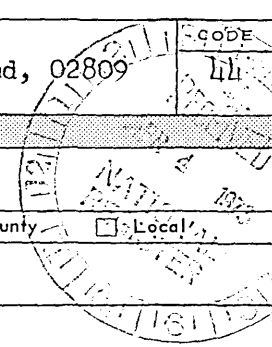
DATE OF SURVEY: 1972       Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:  
John Brown House, 52 Power Street

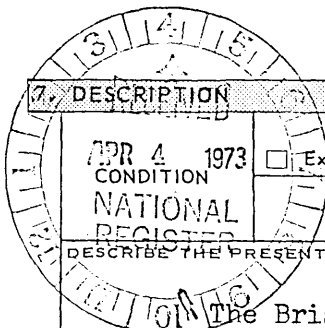
CITY OR TOWN: Providence      STATE: Rhode Island, 02906      CODE: 44

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE:  
COUNTY:  
ENTRY NUMBER:  
DATE:

FOR NPS USE ONLY



DESCRIPTION		(Check One)					
APR 4 1973 CONDITION NATIONAL REGISTER	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed	
	(Check One)			(Check One)			
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Bristol County Jail, a gable-roofed, two-and-a-half-storied, stone-walled structure, was built in 1828 to replace an earlier jail erected in 1792 on the same site. Its five-bay-wide front faces north on the sidewalk line of narrow Court Street and measures 36'-5" wide by 46'-4" deep. In 1859, a two-story addition to the rear, or south, and slightly offset to the east side, was constructed; this is built of granite, measures 20'-0" wide by 43'-2" deep, and is capped by a flat roof.

When the new jailhouse was built the strictest regard for economy was observed by those appointed by the General Assembly to supervise its construction, and it cost only \$3,700. The exterior of this rubble structure presents a severe appearance and is devoid of any detail or embellishment. Much of the material of the former 1792 jailhouse was re-used (for example, its old red cedar clapboards that were still in good condition were split and used as laths for the new building).

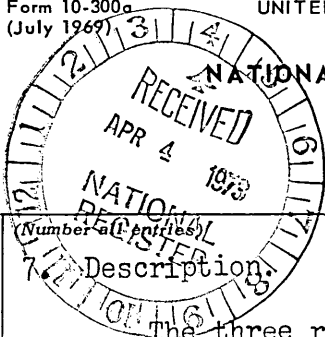
If the 1859 rear addition is today taken as an integral part of the fabric, one can say that exterior alterations have been of a minor nature. The appearance of the deeply-recessed Greek Revival front entrance has been changed, within the recess, and has newer doors and transom; a bracketed wooden Victorian hood has also been extended over the sidewalk. On the east side is the original kitchen entrance, a simple rectangular opening recessed into the 21"-thick stone wall. The rear entrance of the 1828 building is original; it has a fanlight and is also recessed. Excepting for one second-story window of the 1828 building, its original twelve-over-eight and twelve-over twelve sashes were changed (probably at the same time that the alteration to the front entrance was made) to those of two-over-two Victorian type. The easternmost of the two original internal brick chimneys in the older portion of the building was removed to first-floor level during alterations by the Bristol Historical Society in 1959.

The basic floor plan exhibits a symmetrical, central-hall, three-room-deep arrangement with the two internal chimneys occurring at the centers of the divisions between front and middle rooms. The first-floor hall (like that above) originally ran from the front entrance to the rear door of the building. The stairway, with its moderately-sized turned newel and square balusters, was contained within this hall; the stair runs from the back to the front to reach the second floor and is placed close to the rear of the building. As the first floor was used as the jailer's living-quarters and offices and the cells were located upstairs, such an arrangement was perhaps deemed a better means of security, as prisoners could be received by means of the back entrance. The rear, kitchen, and cellar doors were all, and are still, protected by iron bars, while the front entrance, which probably once had Greek Revival sidelights, was probably felt to be less secure.

(See Continuation Sheet 1.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)-1

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Bristol	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE APR 24 1973

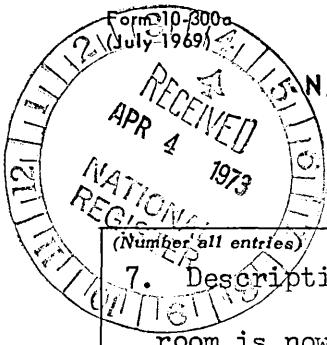
The three rooms on the west side of the first floor are believed to have been used by the jailer and his family as their living-quarters--the front room serving as parlour, the center one as dining room, the rearmost as kitchen. These rooms were accessible to each other en suite, while both front parlour and dining room also had doorways opening into the hall. The present doorway between the kitchen and the foot of the stairway in the hall was installed in 1959. Both the front parlour, now used as a research room by the Bristol Historical and Preservation Society, and the dining room, now its library, retain their original fireplaces, closets, and pine-board floors. The front room exhibits its original run-moulded wainscot which at each window forms the sill nosing and apron. The sides of all the first-floor windows are splayed inward and plastered, the sash being set at the outside face of the stone walls. A connecting passage between these two rooms has now been made a lavatory.

The three spaces on the east side of the first floor are believed to have been used by the jailer in his daily work. The front room--the largest on this floor--probably served as a public reception room, while the middle room was the jailer's private office. The back room was very narrow and was perhaps originally used for filing records or for storage. Both the public and private offices had fireplaces and wide-board floors; the east front room had a moulded wainscot identical to that in the front room on the opposite side of the hall. When the Bristol Historical Society moved into the building (after its abandonment as a jail by the State of Rhode Island in June, 1957) a meeting-space was required for its membership, and partitions which formerly separated the three east rooms from each other and from the central hall were removed to create one large area.

The second floor, as originally designed, served in part as a detention section, while the two front chambers, one to each side of the full-length central hall, are thought to have been bedrooms for the jailer and his family. The chamber to the west of the hall is the same size as the front parlour below, while the chamber opposite is only half the size of the former public reception room downstairs. The larger of these two rooms is quite elegant in its simplicity, with its original wainscot and cornice of run mouldings; to the left of its fireplace is a closet. All finished spaces on this floor exhibit beaded baseboards and wide-board floors.

The middle room on the west side of the second floor was probably a low-security cell area, as indicated by the two windows which are set flush with the inside face of the thick stone walls. Markings of the original exterior iron bars can be seen in the massive granite sills. As this

(See Continuation Sheet 2.)



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet) - 2

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Bristol	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	APR 24 1973

(Number all entries)

7. Description.

room is now quite large (13'-2" wide by 20'-6" deep), it may originally have been subdivided into two cells. Located above the original dining room and a portion of the kitchen, this space contains a fireplace and closet and an access--probably not original--to a small hall to the rear of the building which contains the enclosed attic stair and which is also accessible by an original door from the main hall.

Because of an added partition between the east front bedroom and adjacent cell, there now exist four basic spaces on the east side of the second floor, rather than the typical three. The two middle rooms, bisected by the former chimney wall, were used as medium-security cells. A window in the northern of these two chambers retains its original twelve-over-eight sash and hinged interior steel shutters as well as its original steel-reinforced door and simple mantel.

Maximum security was provided by a two-cell jail block located in the south-east corner of the second floor. Framed in wood, with the exception of the exterior stone walls and iron doors, these cells and their ante-hall exist today as built in 1828. There are no provisions for heat, light, water, or sanitary facilities; air is provided by a small narrow slit through the exterior masonry wall and a peephole in the iron door. Under the floor of the two cells are two courses of 8"x8" timbers superimposed one upon the other, to prevent escape. These timbers, like some in the basement, are believed to be salvage from the 1792 jail, and their weight is borne by a solid brick wall, two-feet-thick, at the first-floor level and additionally supported by a fieldstone wall in the cellar. (The brick wall which formerly separated the middle and rear spaces on this side of the first floor has since been removed and the weight above re-supported by steel beams.) While front and west exterior walls, including interior finish, are 21" in thickness, it is of note that the remaining two walls which help support these corner cells are a full four inches thicker. Embedded in the plaster walls of the cells is an iron grating, and fixtures for chains are attached to the floor. Excepting these cells, which are themselves an exhibit, the entire second floor is now used for display purposes.

The attic or third floor consists of a single, unpartitioned finished room which runs the full length of the building and was probably used for storage. In the cellar, within the west chimney foundation, are a fireplace and several ovens--one being a beehive oven; this cellar does not appear to have been partitioned except for the fieldstone wall needed to support the cells in the southeast corner above it.

(See Continuation Sheet 3.)

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)-3

STATE	Rhode Island	
COUNTY	Bristol	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE	
	APR 24	1973

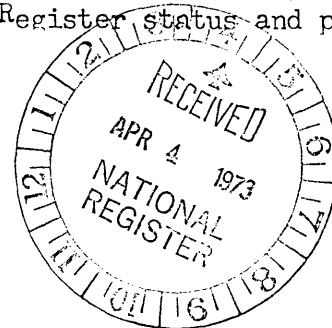
(Number all entries)

7. Description.

Constructed of massive cut-granite blocks, the 1859 rear addition has barred windows a full two stories in height. Within its space are contained two galleries of cells, five on each level. The cells on the upper level are reached by a cast-iron stair. Access here from the 1828 jail was gained by a solid steel door hung in the common wall joining older and newer structures, and there is an outside door in the new wing's west wall.

8. Significance.

Because of the architectural quality of this edifice and its importance to its environment; because it is an unusual building-type in basically unaltered condition; and because it today serves an organization whose goals are to preserve--through its exhibits--elements from the past; to foster education and research through its historical library; and to encourage the restoration of local historic properties by making individual owners and the general public aware of what surrounds them, one advocates the former Bristol County Jail and the present Bristol Historical and Preservation Society as worthy of National Register status and protection.



**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

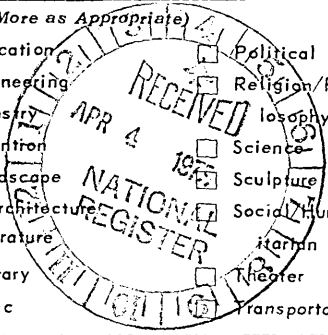
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1828, 1859

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Philosophy	<u>Local history</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human-	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The building now occupied by the Bristol Historical and Preservation Society lies within the heart of the historic center of Bristol on a narrow lane (Court Street) which runs from Hope Street to High Street, two important and old thoroughfares. Facing the head of Court Street on the Town Common is the Bristol County Courthouse, a Federal-period building erected in 1817 and now entered on the National Register. Also within half-a-block of the old Bristol County Jail is the former Bristol Post Office and Customs house designed by Ammi B. Young in 1857, now owned by the local Y. M. C. A. and also entered on the National Register. The former jail is important to its immediate neighborhood and makes a significant contribution to the total environment: it is an unusual building-type in basically unaltered condition and now is accessible to the general public. One of a limited number of extant Bristol structures constructed of granite rubble and not stuccoed, the character of its walls is an outstanding feature.

In 1936, the Bristol Historical Society was formed and the first official meeting held in December, at the Bristol County Courthouse. In 1952, the first floor of the Rogers Free Library building was procured as a permanent meeting-place, but this building burned in July, 1957, causing damage to the society's possessions and papers. Not long afterwards the old Bristol County Jail was vacated, and the society was able to obtain from the State of Rhode Island a twenty-year lease of the building and grounds. The first meeting there was held on May 3, 1959, and subsequently help towards restoration and adaptation was given by many interested citizens--especially Norman Herreshoff, member of a family long rooted in the community.

The organization which is now called the Bristol Historical and Preservation Society has had to make functional alterations and repairs to its building, including the creation of a meeting-room, a reference library etc. The society is now interested in restoring the building to its original appearance as far as is feasible. Projects proposed include restoration of the Greek Revival front entrance with sidelights and transom; replacement of all sash to the twelve-over-eight and twelve-over-twelve original patterns; removal of an added brick chimney at the rear; repointing of stonework; and , finally, restoration of the fireplace and brick ovens in the basement.

(See Continuation Sheet 3.)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Almy, Alice B., ed.: Excerpts from an unpublished paper in the Bristol Historical and Preservation Society by Frank L. Martin, President, 1962.

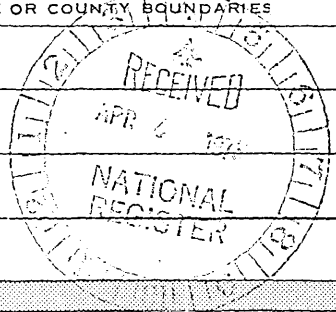
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		41° 40' 10.22" N	71° 16' 32.32" W	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than one acre

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



01.21  
1/24/74  
450000

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
Lombard John Pozzi, Surveyor-Researcher

ORGANIZATION: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission DATE: March 10, 1973

STREET AND NUMBER:  
John Brown House, 52 Power Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence STATE: Rhode Island, 02906 CODE: 44

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: Frederick Williams

Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 30 March 1973

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

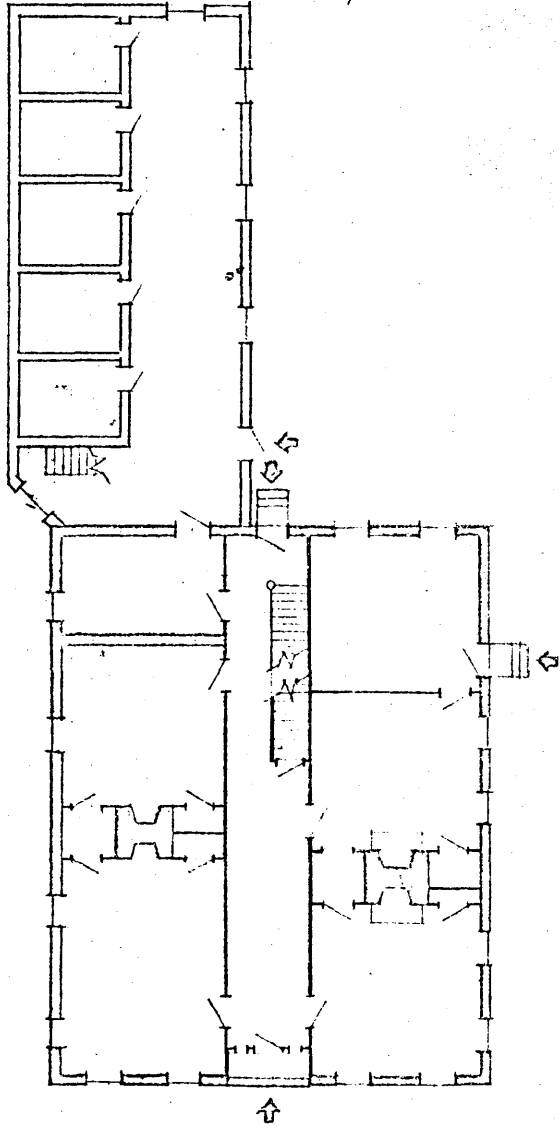
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Robert J. Utley  
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

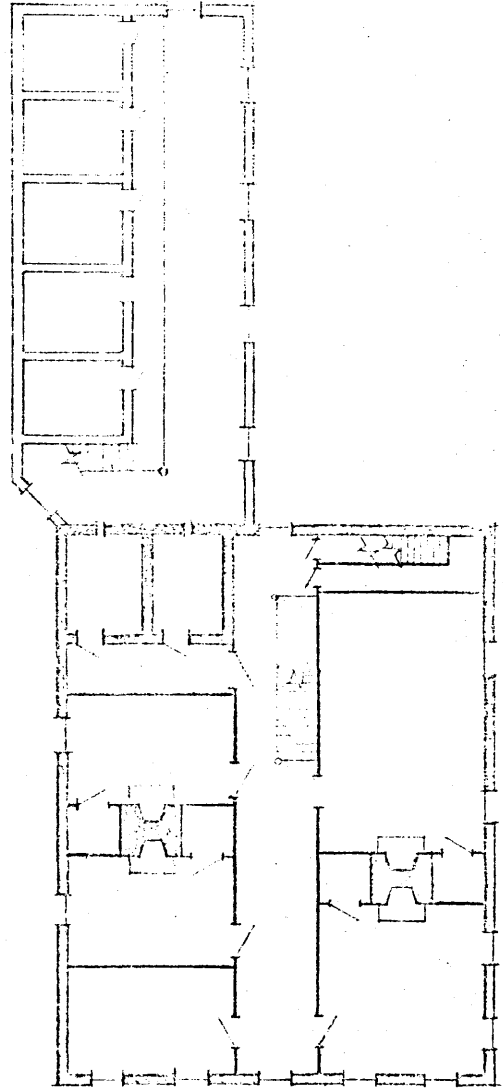
Date: 4/24/74

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_  
Keeper of The National Register

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

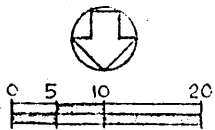
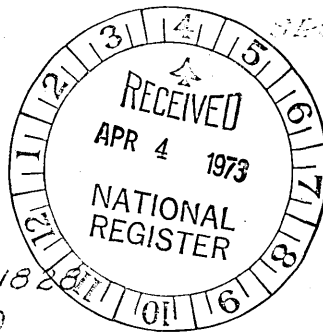


FIRST FLOOR PLAN



SECOND FLOOR PLAN

- ▬ ORIGINAL BUILDING OF 1828
- ▬ REAR ADDITION OF 1859



FORMER BRISTOL COUNTY JAIL  
 48 COURT STREET, BRISTOL, RHODE-ISLAND  
 DRAWN BY LOMBARD JOHN POZZI 1973