

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

For NPS use only

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

received MAR 7 1985  
date entered APR 18 1985

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

**1. Name**

historic Fairfield County Jail

and/or common Fairfield County Jail

**2. Location**

street & number 1106 North Avenue

n/a not for publication

city, town Bridgeport

N/A vicinity of

state Connecticut

code 09

county Fairfield

code 001

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	<u>N/A</u>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input 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: <u>jail</u>

**4. Owner of Property**

name State of Connecticut

street & number 165 Capitol Avenue

city, town Hartford

N/A vicinity of

state Connecticut

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Town Clerk's Office

street & number 45 Lyon Terrace

city, town Bridgeport

state Connecticut

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title State Register of Historic Places has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Connecticut Historical Commission, 59 S. Prospect St.,

city, town Hartford

state Connecticut

## 7. Description

**Condition**

excellent

good

fair

deteriorated

ruins

unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered

altered

**Check one**

original site

moved date \_\_\_\_\_

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

Fairfield County Jail lies in the northern section of the City of Bridgeport, in a neighborhood which combines both residential and commercial buildings. The property occupies a city block and is bounded on the south by North Avenue, on the east by Fairmount Street, on the north by Beers Street and on the west by Madison Avenue. Both North Avenue and Madison Avenue are major streets in Bridgeport. Beachwood Park lies on the west side of Madison Avenue across the street from the jail. The jail fronts on North Avenue and the ground rises gradually from North Avenue to the rear of the block. The rear of the parcel has been quarried, creating an artificially flat surface. Low stone walls, probably made from the stone quarried on the site, mark the north and parts of the east and west boundaries of the property.

The Victorian Gothic Fairfield County Jail is a sprawling two-and-a-half story red brick structure begun in 1870 and added onto in the late nineteenth century, the turn of the century, and in the early twentieth century. Two new buildings and one new wing have been added to the property since 1960, and the early outbuildings have been demolished. Remnants of a late nineteenth and early twentieth century landscaping scheme remain (see Photographs #1 & #2) in the form of a semi-circular drive, several mature trees and an iron fence on North Avenue. The main block of the building is laid in stretcher bond and is set on a raised basement. A stone belt course divides the basement from the first floor.

The front facade of the jail is the most imposing (Photographs #1 & #2), and it displays the greatest number of Victorian features. The block which houses the entrance is on the east side of the facade and is balanced by a large square block on the west side. The two blocks are joined by a wing which is set back one bay from the plane of the two major blocks. The entrance block is graced by a square-in-section three-story central tower with a hipped roof surmounted by a wooden cupola intended to ventilate the block. The tower has a heavy brick corbel table and Gothic pointed arch windows on both the second and third stages of the tower. A small circular window is set in the second stage above a pair of these Gothic pointed arch windows. Because there is a raised basement the entrance is reached by a flight of ten steps. The entrance is recessed, and doubleleaf doors surmounted by a transom give access to a corridor. To the east of the tower is a three-bay-wide block with a gabled parapet. The same heavy corbel table used on the tower is repeated here. A single window is set in the gable peak. The windows are double-hung wooden sash two-over-two windows with stone block lintels and sills except for those on the second floor, which have Gothic pointed arch surrounds. The upper sash in these windows appears to have been replaced. The western section is set back farther than that on the east. It has a gable roof with the ridge set at right angles to the street, and a heavy brick corbel table. Like the eastern section, Gothic pointed arch windows are used on the second floor. Small gabled blind dormers are set on the roof. The wing joining the east and west blocks is two stories tall with a gable roof. It is ventilated by

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a wooden cupola similar to that on the tower. The wing is four bays wide with a brick corbel table and two-over-two windows with block lintels and sills. The west block has a hipped roof with a shallow gabled projecting pavilion. Three small Gothic pointed arch windows are located in the gable peak. The projecting pavilion is three bays wide and is flanked on either side by one bay. Stone block lintels and sills are used on this block. The east elevation (Photograph #3) is much obscured by the new building which is located to the east of the original jail building. The front section has a frame sunporch surmounted by a pair of narrow Gothic pointed arch windows. The rear section has a hipped roof with large pedimented dormers and a brick corbel table. Stone block lintels surmount modern one-over-one windows. The rear elevation (Photograph #4) consists of two hipped roof wings, one modern and one original, with a small courtyard in-between. This elevation is fourteen bays wide. The west elevation (Photograph #5) consists of a turn-of-the-century wing at the rear with a gable roof and a late nineteenth-century wing with a hipped roof. The turn-of-the-century wing is three bays long and the late nineteenth-century wing is twelve bays long. In the courtyard formed by the intersection of the two wings is a small square one-story brick boiler house with a hipped roof surmounted by a cupola. Just north of the boiler house is located a buff-colored tile smokestack. Both date from the early twentieth century. To the west of the original jail is a parking lot, and to the north is a modern buff brick building.

Because the building is still in use as a jail the interior was inaccessible.

## 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 type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		(Local history)
Criteria A & C				
<b>Specific dates</b>	1870-1871	<b>Builder/Architect</b>	Lambert & Bunnell	

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Fairfield County Jail is a rare survival of a local late nineteenth-century prison still in use for its original purpose (Criterion C). Built for use as a county jail and workhouse in 1870-1871, the structure received significant additions at intervals into the early twentieth century. The most recent additions consist of one wing and two free-standing structures built on the property since 1960. The main block of the jail embodies the distinctive characteristics of late nineteenth and early twentieth century prison architecture. The complex as a whole reflects the changing philosophy of penal administration over a period of over one hundred years (Criterion A).

The Fairfield County Jail is an unusual structure in the context of Connecticut architecture; few jails of this scale exceeding one hundred years of age have survived in the state, and few of these are still in use for their original purpose. The exterior appearance of the main block has changed very little since its construction in 1870-1871 (Compare Photograph #1, a current view, with Photograph #2, a view published in Bridgeport Illustrated in 1891), except for some late nineteenth-and early twentieth-century additions which were constructed of brick and reflect the scale and massing of the original structure. The landscaping of the North Avenue elevation with its semi-circular drive, mature trees and iron fence, reflect the aesthetic values of the nineteenth century.

The only non-contributing structures on the property are the recent addition of a two-story hipped roof brick wing to the rear and two free-standing structures; one to the east side of the main block, and the other to the rear.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Bridgeport Post (Bridgeport), November 18, 1871

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property approx. 8 acres

Quadrangle name Bridgeport

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A	1 1 8	6 5 1 0 7 1 8 1 0	4 5 6 1 3 6 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	1 1 8	6 5 1 0 8 2 1 0	4 5 6 1 0 8 0
E			
G			

B	1 8	6 5 1 0 2 0	4 5 6 1 2 4 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D	1 8	6 5 0 5 6 0	4 5 6 1 2 2 0
F			
H			

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See map attached

### 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 Kate Ohno, Preservation Consultant; edited by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator

organization Connecticut Historical Commission date 1984

street & number 59 S. Prospect St. telephone (203) 566-3005

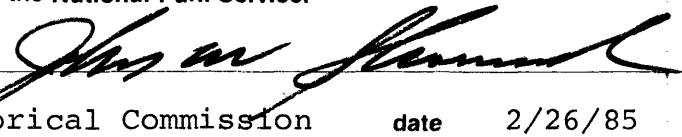
city or town Hartford state Connecticut

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

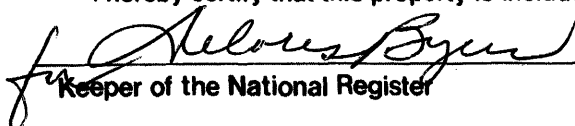
State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Director, Connecticut Historical Commission date 2/26/85

### For NPS use only

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

~~Entered~~ in this National Register

 Keeper of the National Register date 4-18-85

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief of Registration

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The Fairfield County Jail was an outgrowth of the prevailing social philosophy of the early nineteenth century. This philosophy was expressed in the construction of the first penitentiaries in the 1820s in New York and Pennsylvania. Deviancy was believed to be a result of the corruption of the convict's environment. Thus, the rehabilitation of the individual was dependent on the prisoner's isolation and the establishment of a disciplined routine. The setting removed the prisoner from temptations and the regular regimen was relied upon to reform him. As a result, prison architecture became a central concern. The Boston Prison Discipline Society, a social reform organization, considered architecture "one of the most important moral sciences." Military style influenced the construction of jails. Some were modeled after medieval fortresses, often with massive walls, substantial enough to inspire awe in the opinion of the public, and strong enough to maintain security. The turrets and towers of earlier fortresses were adapted as guard stations. Another popular approach to jail construction was to build a structure modeled after a factory; symmetrical wings with regularly spaced windows.

The Fairfield County Jail borrows a bit from both styles of prison architecture. Its asymmetrical massing, bold tower and Gothic windows are reminiscent of earlier historical styles, while the basic plan and the wings are built on the factory model. The jail is not unlike contemporary asylums and almshouses in its plan. The cells in the jail are not dissimilar to the patients rooms and the guard stations not unlike the staff rooms of contemporary hospitals. Both systems depended on isolation, routine, and labor. Both institutions had on-site quarters for the superintendent and a chapel to minister to the inmates' spiritual needs.

Built as the Fairfield County Jail and Workhouse, the building reflects a late nineteenth century trend in institutional care. By definition the jail was intended for those who committed serious crimes while the workhouse was designated for those who had committed minor offenses. By the second half of the century many of those who would have been sent to the almshouse were incarcerated in the workhouse, where life was not much different than in the jails, and often, as in this case, housed in the same building.

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History

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History

The move to initiate construction of the present Fairfield County Jail began in the fall of 1869 at a meeting of the legislative body of Fairfield County. The need for larger county buildings with grounds had been felt for some time and in September, 1869, the Representatives of Fairfield County passed a motion that resulted in a search for a suitable parcel on which to erect a combination county jail and workhouse. A committee was appointed, and by December a seven-acre parcel in the northern part of Bridgeport was purchased from August Bahr for \$9,000. Another smaller tract supplemented the larger tract, and this was acquired from E. B. Goodsell for \$2,000.<sup>1</sup>

The building committee for the jail/workhouse consisted of representatives P. H. Skidmore of Newtown and Matthew Bulkley, Esquire, of Weston, and county commissioners Lyman Keller of Danbury, Henry Morehouse of Darien and Joshua Lord of Bridgeport. The jail/workhouse was designed by the Bridgeport firm of Lambert & Bunnell.<sup>2</sup> Little is known of the two principals of this firm, Edward Richard Lambert, and Rufus W. Bunnell. The firm appears in Bridgeport's oldest city directory, dated 1867-1868, and it endured until 1895. Bunnell is last listed in the directory in 1900 while the last listing for Lambert is in the 1903 city directory.<sup>3</sup> A certain William H. Bunnell, a contemporary of Rufus W. Bunnell, was superintendent of the poor in Bridgeport for many years during the last half of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> Bunnell's connection with the architect Bunnell has not been documented, but if there was a family connection, it may account for the firm being retained for the Fairfield County Jail project.

Wakeman W. Wells, the keeper of the jail, was employed as construction superintendent of the jail/workhouse. The masonry contract was awarded to John Barr, the carpentry contract to Peter Norman, the iron work contract to Pacific Iron Works, the plumbing contract to Wilmot & Middlebrook, the gas and steam fitting contract to Bradbury & Goodsell and the painting contract to Charles Middlebrook. The cost of the main block, a building approximately 106'x178', was \$80,000. Work began on May 9, 1870, and Wells used the inmates of the jail for grading, excavating the foundations, and for laying water and sewerage lines. The original building was designed to contain an apartment for the jailer, a chapel with separate entrance halls, a debtors room over the front hall in the tower, an infirmary and ninety-two cells; eighty for males and twelve for females. The building was originally heated by steam and lit by gas, and both hot and cold running water were provided. When completed in 1871, the jail/workhouse was hailed by the local newspaper as "one of the best...in the State." The surrounding grounds included a quarry, where the inmates were employed.<sup>5</sup>

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Over the years, the neighborhood surrounding the jail property changed considerably. In 1876 the surrounding area was sparsely populated. By 1885 the city limits were located just north of the jail building. By 1917, however, the jail property was an integral part of the city. Beers Street, north of the jail, had been cut through and Beechwood Park was already established on the west side of Madison Avenue. The area was becoming a dense residential neighborhood, characterized by small frame houses on narrow lots.

The 1888 Atlas shows that the jail/workhouse complex changed little in the early years of its existence (see Photograph #2 published in 1891 in Bridgeport Illustrated), but by 1910 an addition had been erected expanding the west elevation, and the north ell had received an addition projecting west. Several small frame and masonry outbuildings were also erected by 1910. The last addition with architectural significance was erected between 1910 and 1917; a square red brick boiler house and a buff tiled smokestack were added to the west elevation in the courtyard formed by the two projecting wings of the main block. Since 1917 the physical plant of the jail has been expanded by the addition of a two-story red brick wing to the rear elevation, and the construction of two new structures on the same property. These changes reflect the property's change in ownership from the Fairfield County government to the State Department of Corrections in recent years. A two-story red brick cell block stands on the east side of the main block, while a large one-story buff brick building stands to the north. The two buildings and the wing added to the rear all date between 1960 and 1983. The property is currently in use as a jail, and thus the interior was not accessible.<sup>6</sup>

End Notes

<sup>1</sup>Bridgeport Post (Bridgeport), November 18, 1871.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Bridgeport Directory and Annual Advertiser (Bridgeport: The Standard Association, 1867), p. 63. See also Bridgeport City Directories 1868-1869 through 1903.

<sup>4</sup>Biographical Record of Fairfield County, Connecticut (Chicago: J.H. Beers & Co., 1899), pp. 573-575.

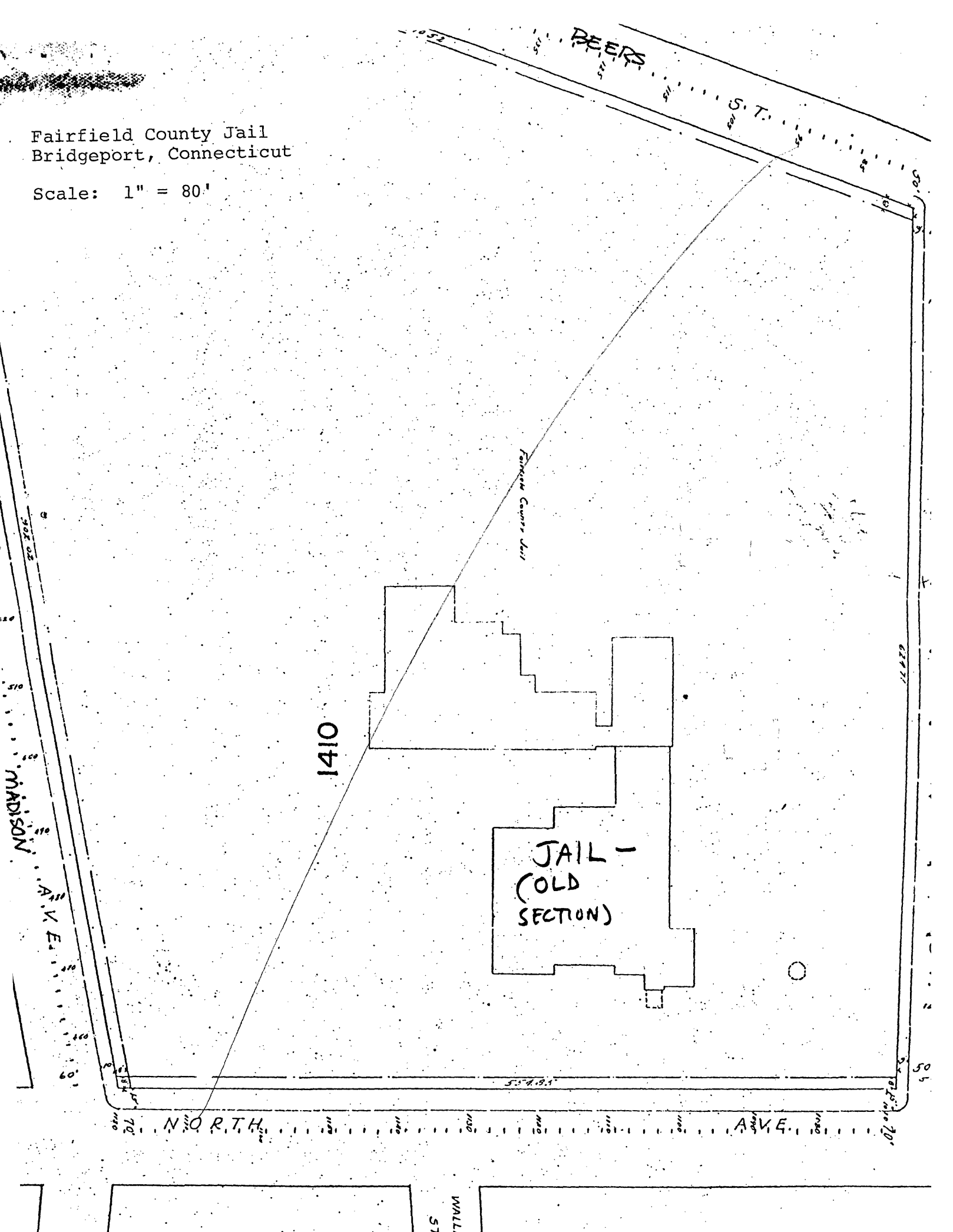
<sup>5</sup>Bridgeport Post (Bridgeport), November 18, 1871.

<sup>6</sup>Atlas of City & Town of Bridgeport (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins, 1888). See also: Atlas of Bridgeport (Boston: W.H. Kershaw, 1910), and Plat Book of the City of Bridgeport (Philadelphia: G.M. Hopkins Co., 1917).

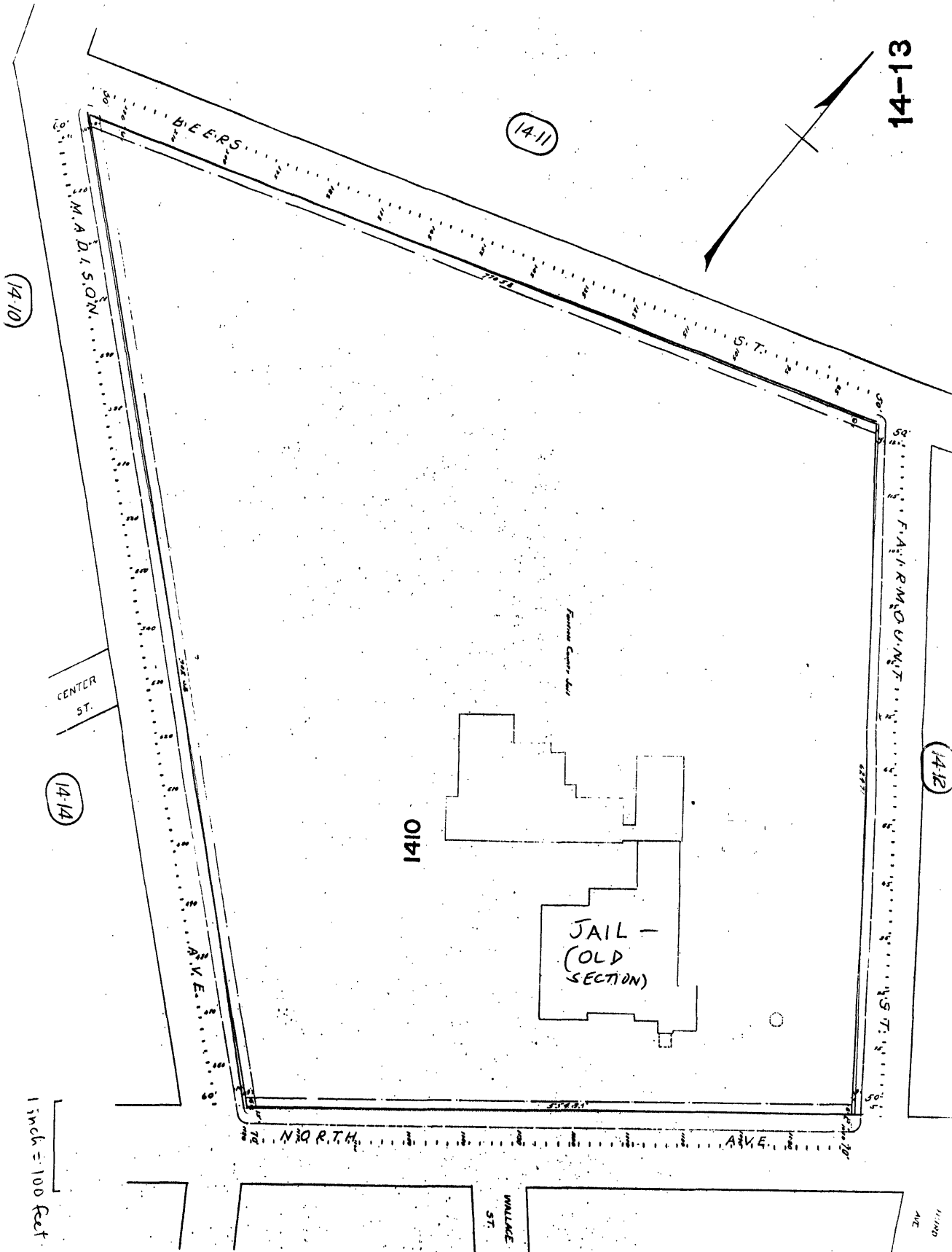


Fairfield County Jail  
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Scale: 1" = 80'



14-13



1 inch = 100 feet

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