

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

For NPS use only

received **JUL 31 1985**

date entered **AUG 29 1985**

**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 Fourth District School

and/or common Little Red Schoolhouse

2. Location

street & number Old Post Road n/a not for publication

city, town North Branford vicinity of Northford

state Connecticut code 09 county New Haven code 009

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	n/a <input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Northford Congregational Church

street & number Old Post Road

city, town North Branford vicinity of Northford state Connecticut

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Town Clerk, North Branford Town Hall

street & number 1599 Foxon Road

city, town North Branford state Connecticut

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1975 federal state county local

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

city, town Hartford state Connecticut

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u>1928</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Fourth District School, built ca.1800, is located in the center of Northford, a small village located in the northwestern part of the town of North Branford. The school occupies a small parcel on a hill next to the Northford Congregational Church parsonage. In order to prevent its demolition, the school was moved to its present site in 1928 from a rural location on Forest Road, approximately one mile from its new location. Although the new site is more densely built, the land surrounding the school is wooded, thereby approximating the rural character of the original location. The school is set back about twenty-five feet from the street in an orientation similar to its former site.

Facing west and resting on a fieldstone foundation, the single-story rectangular structure has three bays on the facade, with a flanking-gable roof covered with asphalt shingles, and an interior-end chimney centered on the south side (photograph #1). Although the school retains its early appearance, much of the original exterior building materials, including roof, chimney, 6-over-9-light sash, and plank shutters, were replaced during its restoration in 1965. Exterior clapboards and the plank-door entrance, however, appear original.

The simple plan of the school consists of a small anteroom that opens into the single classroom (see floor plan). The existing interior finish dates from the restoration of 1965. Ceiling and wall surfaces are plaster over lath. Flush-boarded wainscotting rises from the wood floor to the window sills. A wooden bench with a high shelf is built around three sides of the room, facing a high teachers desk that stands in front of the anteroom wall. A stove (not original) is located at the center of the room. As originally furnished, classroom seating probably consisted of rows of benches facing a teachers bench or table, with a stove backed up against the anteroom wall.

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/ 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) historic preservation
<input type="checkbox"/> invention				

(Criteria A, C)

Specific dates ca. 1800 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Construction of the Fourth District School followed formation of Northford's fourth school district in 1769, and paralleled the movement on local and state levels to provide public education outside of the jurisdiction of ecclesiastical societies (Criterion A). Although considerably restored in 1965, the schoolhouse retains its original design quality. It is a good and relatively rare example of a single-room frame schoolhouse, a type which proliferated in New England during the 18th-and-early-19th centuries (Criterion C). Purchased from the town of North Branford in 1928 by the League of Women Voters, the school was relocated by the League to a parcel of land provided by the Northford Congregational Church. Reused as a public library and later restored as a museum, the preservation of the Fourth District School was an early example of cooperation between a private organization and local government which facilitated retention of an endangered landmark.

Historical Background

The evolution of the single-room schoolhouse is related to church supported parish or ecclesiastical societies which spawned the formation of school societies or districts during the latter part of the 18th century. Settled around 1700, Northford village was originally divided into north and south school districts supervised by the local ecclesiastical society. Third and fourth school districts were organized in 1755 and 1769 respectively. Originally sited on Forest Road, two miles south of Northford center, the Fourth District School was constructed in ca.1800. Prior to this time classes were held at the town's meetinghouse. The school was in session during the winter months only; the term increased from 4 months in 1841, to 6 months in 1855, and 7½ months in 1870 (contingent upon a minimum enrollment of 24 pupils). Children of varying ages attended class together. The curriculum consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic and spelling.

The responsibility for public education, left to parish or ecclesiastical societies through the first half of the 18th century, shifted to school societies after 1800. School societies managed school districts, and were empowered by the General Assembly in 1766 to purchase, receive, hold and convey school property; and to elect officers and committees, employ teachers and apportion money.

(continued)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Davis, Lydia. "Address to Totoket Historical Society."
 Unpublished manuscript filed with Margaret Brennan, Lanes Pond
 Road, Northford. 1982. (continued)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Wallingford

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

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4	5	8	4	4	4	0
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Verbal boundary description and justification

The legal boundary description may be found in Volume 16, Page 382
 and Volume 19, Page 104 of the North Branford Town Records.

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

state	code	county	n/a code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jack A. Gold Architectural Historian Edited by John Herzan,
 organization Jack A. Gold Historic Preservation Consultant date March 1985 National Register Coordina-
 street & number 277 Dwight St. telephone 203 624 4673 tor
 city or town New Haven state CT 06511

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 July 11, 1985

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date

8/29/85

 Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
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Fourth District School, North Branford (Northford), CT
Continuation sheet

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8. SIGNIFICANCE

The General Assembly in 1865 enabled municipalities to consolidate school districts in order to improve the quality of public education in the state. This action followed years of private-sector lobbying for public education. The Society for the Improvement of Common Schools, founded by Noah Webster in 1827, sought to recognize that no centralization, standards, or uniformity of teaching existed in the state's schools. An article in the February 1819 issue of Connecticut Journal reported that despite an increase in population, the number of school-age children enrolled in public schools actually declined between 1811 and 1819.¹ A number of state laws passed after 1865 hastened the advancement of public education--these included a compulsory attendance law in 1872, and an act authorizing the establishment of public kindergartens in 1886. The State Board of Education, reorganized in 1868, levied increased taxes to assist public education.

Despite increased support, public schools continued to operate under relatively primitive conditions. During the 1870s the average salary for a male teacher at the Fourth District School was \$14.00 per month (\$5.75 per month for women). Parents of school children were expected to furnish wood to fire the school stove. Between 1919 and 1920 North Branford's archaic school districts were consolidated into a single system; the Fourth District School was closed and slated for demolition.

The relocation and restoration of the Fourth District School was the first major project of the North Branford League of Women Voters, an organization founded in response to the passage of the 19th amendment to the U.S. Constitution giving women the right to vote. Under the direction of President May Holabird, the League purchased the school from the town in 1928, obtained a 99-year lease from the Northford Congregational Church, moved the building to its present site, and used it as a public library from 1933 to 1956. The school was restored to its present appearance during the 1960s by carpenter Joseph Bianchi.

Architectural Significance

The Fourth District School is a relatively rare example of an early-19th-century schoolhouse that retains its original architectural integrity. As the only surviving schoolhouse of its kind in North Branford, and one of only a few extant structures in New

(continued)

¹See Rollin G. Osterweiss, Three Centuries of New Haven, 1638-1938. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953, page 224.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE

Haven County, the small building is an important landmark for the town. The exterior and interior design quality of the school is intact. During restoration care was taken to preserve as much as possible of the original fabric of the building, including the structural frame, exterior clapboard and entrance door. Replacement sash and plank shutters duplicate the appearance of the original materials. Architecturally, its austere, utilitarian quality and lack of ornamentation are the sources of its esthetic interest. Since relocation fifty-seven years ago the schoolhouse has served a variety of public uses--as a library and now a museum it provides an insight on the beginnings of public education in Northford and North Branford.

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

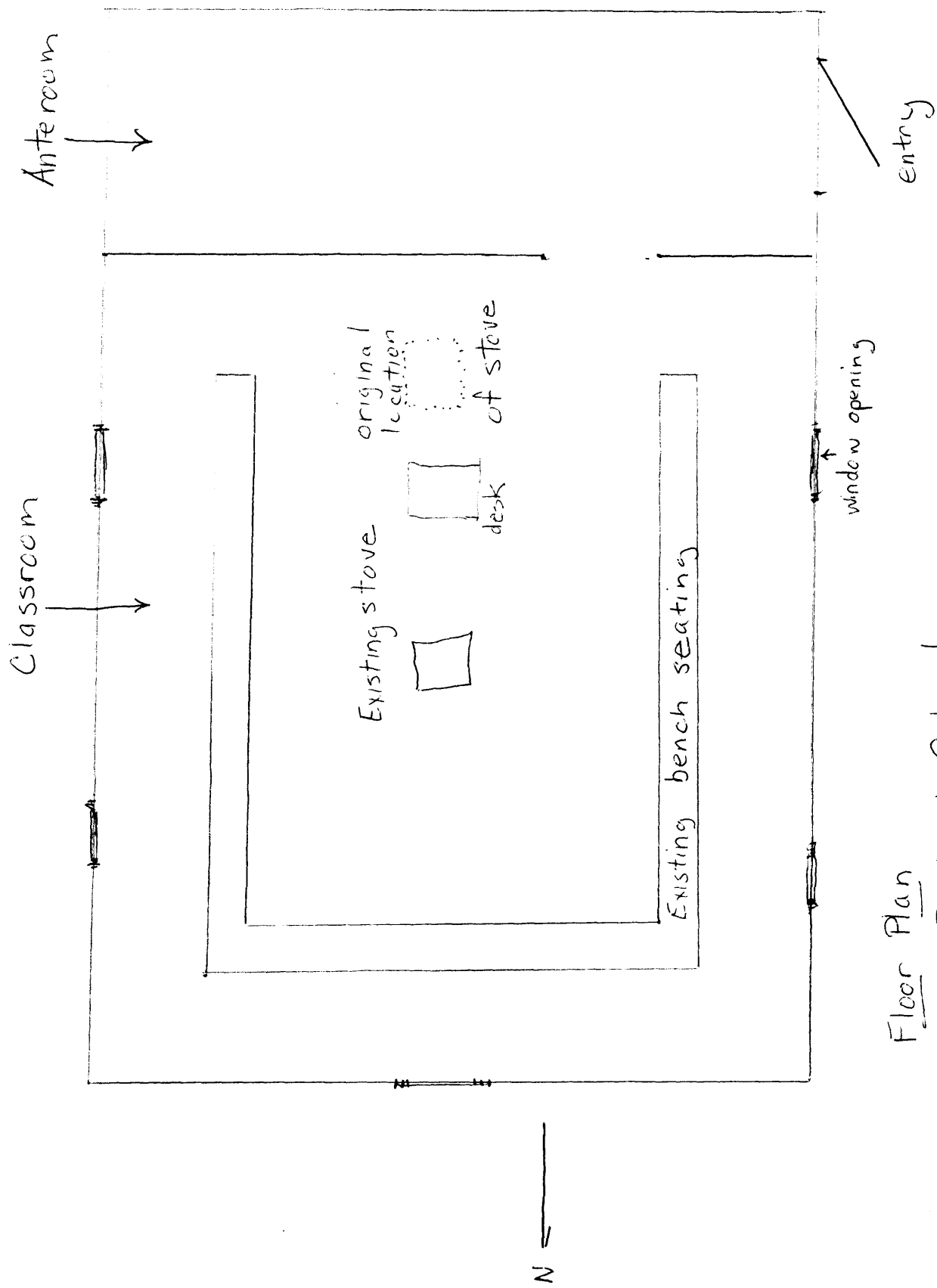
Hill, Everett G. A Modern History of New Haven. New York: S.J. Clarke publishing Company, 1918.

Miller, Herbert C. The History of North Branford and Northford. North Branford: The Totoket Historical Society, 1982.

Osborn, Norris Galpin, ed. History of Connecticut. Charles L. Ames, "History of Education in Connecticut." New York: The States History Company, 1925.

Osterweis, Rollin G. Three Centuries of New Haven, 1638-1938. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953.

Rockey, J. L. History of New Haven County, Connecticut. New York: W. W. Preston & Company, 1892.



Floor Plan
 Fourth District School
 North Branford (Northford), CT
 (not drawn to scale)