

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

For NPS use only

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

received JAN 8 1987

date entered APR 10 1987

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

1. Name

historic Rose Island Lighthouse

and/or common Rose Island Lighthouse

2. Location

street & number southwest point of Rose Island ___ not for publication

city, town Newport N.A. vicinity of

state Rhode Island code 44 county Newport code 005

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name City of Newport

street & number City Hall, Broadway

city, town Newport ___ vicinity of state Rhode Island 02840

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Registry of Deeds, City Hall

street & number Broadway

city, town Newport state Rhode Island 02840

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
title preliminary survey of light- has this property been determined eligible? yes no
houses in Rhode Island

date C. 1974 federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Rose Island Lighthouse, put in service in 1870 and inactive since 1971, remains a very visible presence in lower Narragansett Bay. Lying some 1¼ miles northwest of Newport Harbor in the main passage up the Bay and a half mile south of Newport Bridge (see USGS map), it is not only familiar to mariners, but also to motorists crossing the bridge. Low-lying Rose Island is dominated by this single navigational landmark (see figures 1 and 2). The 1½-acre lighthouse site takes up the 14-acre island's southwest point. Atop the natural rock of this promontory, a circular stone bastion was erected, 85 feet in diameter and twelve feet high. This structure, built c. 1798 as the southwest work of Fort Hamilton, forms a podium on which the lighthouse stands. A variety of long-unused, relatively low, military structures dot the remainder of the island.*

The lighthouse, painted red and white, is a small yet striking building--a boldly scaled, visually dominant 1½-story, mansard-roofed frame structure. An octagonal tower rising from the west facade at the roofline carries an octagonal iron lantern surrounded by an iron-railed balcony. From ground level to lantern top, Rose Island Lighthouse is some 40 feet tall (see figures 2 through 4). The original section of the structure, erected in 1869, measures 30 by 26 feet; a rear ell, 18 by 10, was added in the early twentieth century. The exterior walls were originally clapboard; since the 1938 Hurricane, they have been clad with wood shingle. The roof deck was and is covered with sheet metal. The sides of the mansard were originally covered with patterned slate but now, like the walls, are shingle-clad. Extra-wide gutters catch rain water from the roof, and this water supply was channeled to a basement cistern. The cistern survives but has been superceded by a 10,000-gallon outdoor tank located at the back of the building. The lighthouse exterior is in fairly good condition, save for the loss of a number of windows and doors destroyed by vandals.

The interior, though badly vandalized, remains basically intact. The building is divided into two dwelling units, one on the first floor and one on the second. On the first floor (figures 5 and 6) are five rooms--kitchen, dining room, two bedrooms and what on 1940-vintage plans was styled a "music room," the latter subsequently converted into a bath. On the second floor were three bedrooms (one later converted into a bath), dining room, kitchen and store room. The watch room, at third-story level in the tower, leads via a hatch into the octagonal glazed lantern which has been empty of equipment since 1971. It housed a red, sixth-order Fresnel beacon, 61 feet above the water, visible for eleven miles. The cellar below the lighthouse is largely taken up by the 4,000-gallon, brick-vaulted and brick-lined cistern. Little interior trim survives in the building, but what is left is very

*As most of the remains of Fort Hamilton, as well as other military structures are located outside the parcel on which Rose Island Lighthouse stands, they are not discussed substantively here. That important aspect of Rose Island's history is the subject of a separate investigation to determine National Register eligibility.

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
	<input type="checkbox"/> invention			

Specific dates 1869-1870 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Built in 1869 and put in service in January, 1870, Rose Island Lighthouse is significant as a telling, distinctive and well-known landmark vividly recalling for present-day Rhode Islanders and visitors the maritime heritage of Narragansett Bay. Erected during the hayday of coastal transportation, when hundreds of passenger steamers, freighters and fishing vessels plied local waters, Rose Island Light warned navigators away from treacherous shoals north of Newport Harbor in the main channel leading from Block Island Sound and Newport up the Bay to Fall River, Providence and lesser ports. Part of a system of navigational aids which guided Bay pilots, Rose Island light is remarkable because it is so highly visible: Every day, thousands of motorists view it from the elevated lanes of Newport Bridge. Seen from above, this diminutive red and white lighthouse stands out amid a vast panorama of sea and land--a symbol of the Bay's waterborne heritage. No other Rhode Island lighthouse is so fixed in popular memory.

Architecturally, Rose Island Lighthouse is of conventional design for its period and for the characteristics of its relatively protected site away from the open sea. Three nearly identical lighthouses once existed in Narragansett Bay at Gaspee Point, Sabin Point and Pomham Rocks. Only the latter, built in 1871, survives; located off East Providence, it is a National Register property.

Like the structure itself, the signal housed in Rose Island Lighthouse was standard: a fixed, red, sixth-order Fresnel beacon--the smallest Fresnel lens, used in harbors, bays and rivers. As was characteristic in the post-Civil War period, Rose Island's first keepers were wounded Union Army veterans who lived on the premises with their families. Lighthouse tending remained a family affair until the Lighthouse Service was discontinued and the Coast Guard took over in 1941.

Ironically, Newport Bridge--the very bridge which makes Rose Island Light uniquely prominent today, conferring upon it emblematic status as a symbol of the Bay's maritime heritage--has rendered Rose Island Lighthouse obsolete. Construction of the bridge required changes in the main channel and thus new navigational aids. The bridge opened in 1969; Rose Island Light became inactive in 1971. For a time it served as a scientific monitoring station utilized by the University of Rhode Island. This use has discontinued, however, and the lighthouse has been vacant and subject to vandalism for several years.

It is the intention of the City of Newport to acquire Rose Island Lighthouse, to restore it, make it habitable, and to preserve it as a monument to Newport and Rhode Island's maritime past.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Champlin, Richard L., "Rose Island Centennial," Newport History, vol. 43, #39, summer 1970, pp. 65-70.

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.5 acres

Quadrangle name Newport

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	9	3	0	4	4	1	0	4	5	9	6	2	0	0
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

The area nominated, the whole of the light station site, comprises all of lot 2, assessor's plat 45.

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David Chase, Consultant

organization

date

street & number 5613 Boxhill Lane

telephone 301-435-8221

city or town Baltimore

state Maryland 21210

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 Frank C. Williamson

title

date 12-24-86

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

William B. Bushong
Keeper of the National Register

date 4/10/87

Attest: Beth Savage
Chief of Registration

date 4-10-87

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Continuation sheet 1

Item number 7

Page 2

simple and indicates that the lighthouse interiors could be restored without too much difficulty.

Several ancillary structures surround Rose Island Lighthouse: the water tank noted above; three fuel tanks; a gable-roofed, 1-story brick storage shed with leanto addition; and a small, square, hip-roofed brick structure below the circular bastion on the rocks west of the lighthouse where a fog signal was housed.

Structure: 1

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Continuation sheet 2

Item number 9

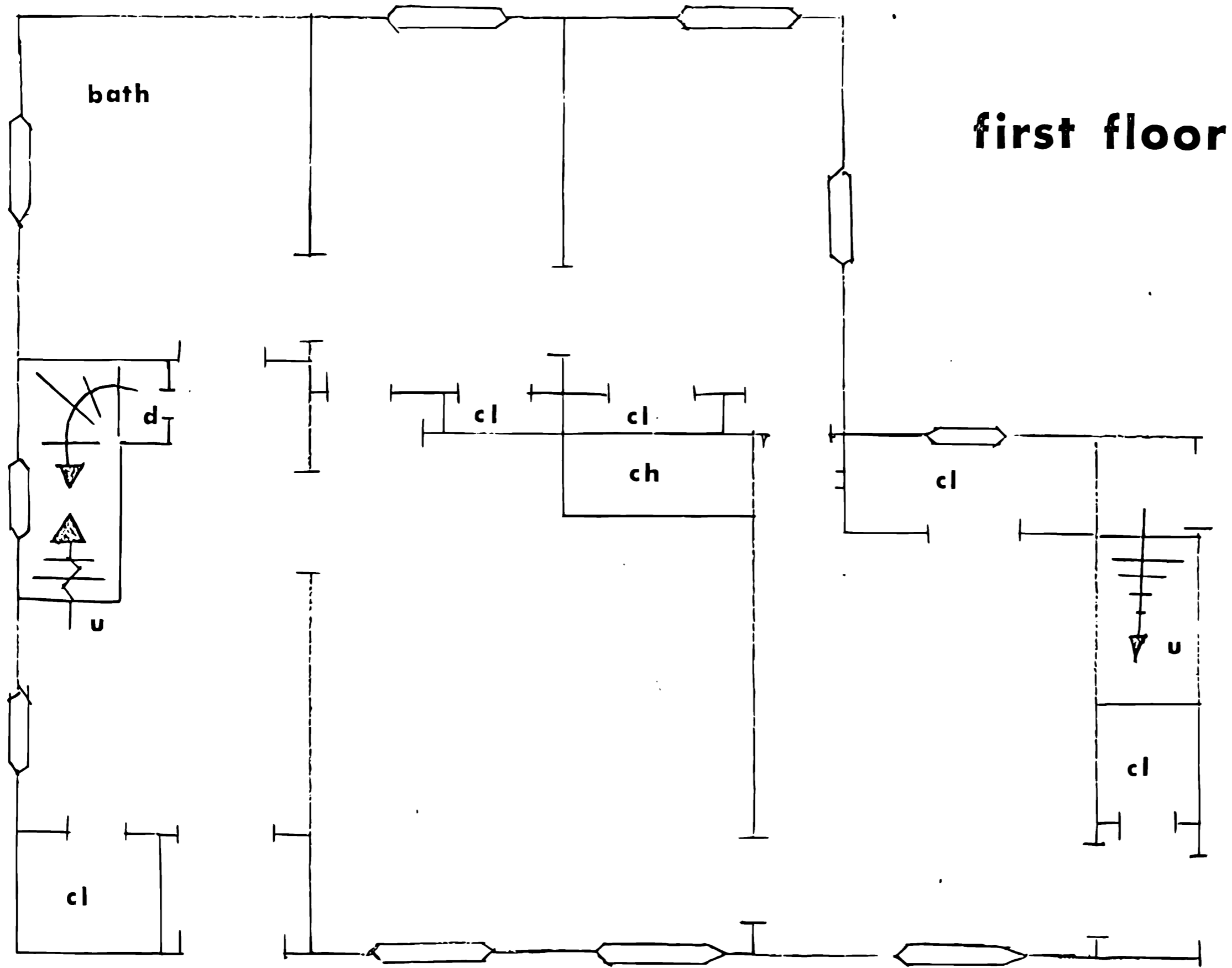
Page 2

Holland, Francis R., Jr., American Lighthouses, Brattleboro, Vt., 1972,
pp. 13-46.

"Rose Island Light Station" measured drawings, United States Coast Guard,
1940 (set on file at the Planning Department, Newport City Hall).

The Walter Nebiker Post Card Collection, Warren, R.I., Rhode Island Light-
houses Album.

Rose Island Lighthouse



not to scale



1/8/87

ROSE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE
Newport, R.I.

Draftsman: Guy Weston
Original filed at: Planning Dept., Newport City Hall

First floor plan.

Figure #5