

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE: Rhode Island
COUNTY: Providence
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE MAY 1 1974

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

1. NAME

COMMON: Woonsocket City Hall
AND/OR HISTORIC: Harris Institute

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 169 Main Street	
CITY OR TOWN: Woonsocket	CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: #1: Fernand J. St. Germain
STATE Rhode Island	CODE 44
COUNTY: Providence	CODE 007

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <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	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <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 (Specify) <u>Library</u>

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME: City of Woonsocket		
STREET AND NUMBER: 169 Main Street		
CITY OR TOWN: Woonsocket	STATE: Rhode Island	CODE: 44

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Woonsocket City Hall		
STREET AND NUMBER: 169 Main Street		
CITY OR TOWN: Woonsocket	STATE: Rhode Island	CODE: 44

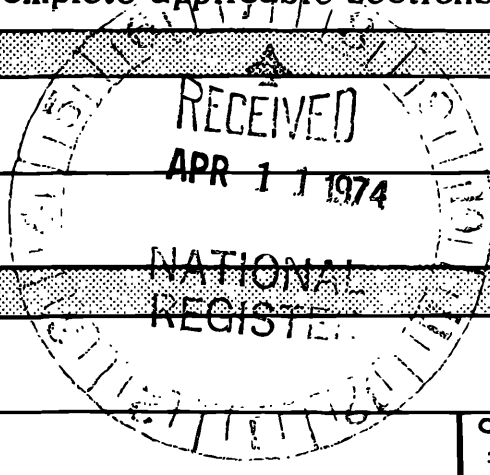
6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Rhode Island Inventory		
DATE OF SURVEY: 1974 <input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local		
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission		
STREET AND NUMBER: 52 Power Street		
CITY OR TOWN: Providence	STATE: Rhode Island	CODE: 44

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
COUNTY:  
ENTRY NUMBER  
DATE

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Woonsocket City Hall at 169 Main Street occupies a key visual position in a district of banks, stores and office buildings. The density of development here has been broken by occasional parking lots and the vacant building site immediately north of City Hall now landscaped as a park. Nevertheless, this is the hub of downtown Woonsocket.

The oldest section of City Hall is the Harris Block erected between April, 1855 and the spring of 1858 by Edward Harris, Woonsocket's leading industrialist. As built, the Harris Block was a three story brick structure with ground level access to the basement story in the rear. It measured approximately 65x100'. The masonry contract for the building was awarded to Albert B. Cole of Woonsocket, the carpentry contract to a "Mr. Slade" of Providence. The architect is unknown.

The Main Street facade of the Harris Block originally had an arcuated cast iron front on the first floor. A central entrance with an enclosed porch led to a stairhall and the upper floors. Four lateral entrances gave access to the stores which occupied the street level space. The first floor of the building was altered in 1891 by extending it out about fifteen feet and facing it with plate glass store fronts. At that time a cubical one story stone addition was made above the central entrance. It bears two date stones: 1856, 1859.

The mastic-coated upper register of the Harris Block's Main Street facade is otherwise little altered. It is divided into three units by a broad and slightly projected central pavilion. This pavillion is defined less by projection than by the cross gable surmounting it which breaks the continuity of the roof line. A projected string course at the level of the third story window sills creates a counterpoised horizontal accent.

As is characteristic of Italianate buildings of the 1840's and 50's Romanesque and Renaissance details are freely juxtaposed on the Main Street elevation. The entablature -- with its plain frieze and heavy dentillated and modillioned cornice -- is based on Renaissance models. So too are the quoins and the volutes which support the cornice returns of the cross gable. The paired roundhead windows, elaborated with engaged Corinthian colonnettes, were inspired by Romanesque architectural precedent. And coming full circle, the use of cast iron for much of this detail is a nineteenth century innovation.

The interior of the structure has been drastically changed. In the 1850's, the entire third story was a single room, 96x62' with a 25' ceiling height. It was known as Harris Hall and could seat 1100. The second floor was probably first used as a "Sunday School." The first floor contained stores, and the basement was at least planned to accommodate a public bathhouse, though there is no evidence that it was ever used for this purpose.

See continuation sheet 1

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**B. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |  |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century            | <input checked="" 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) 1855-58, 1860, 1891

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering          | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi-            | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry             | losophy   | _____  |
| <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                     | Architecture                                  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Human- | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature           | itarian   | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater                  | _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation           | _____  |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Woonsocket City Hall, the former Harris Institute, bears witness to the enterprising vision of the man who made Woonsocket a place of consequence. Edward Harris put Woonsocket "on the map." When Harris came to the community in 1831, it was little more than a collection of six distinct mill villages. At his death in 1872, it was a single, politically unified town.

In large measure, Edward Harris was responsible for this transformation. Harris owned the largest textile mills in Woonsocket, brought in the railroad, donated the first high school, laid out new streets and residential districts, and lobbied for political unification of the area. The Harris Block indicated his desire to improve the community, and signaled Woonsocket's growing importance, its coming of age as an urban center.

Main Street in the 1850's was a straggling accretion of warehouses, factories and wood frame dwellings converted to use as stores. The Harris Block began the transformation of Main Street into a citified downtown district. Today, City Hall continues to function as the linchpin of Woonsocket's central business district.

The Harris Block reflected the economic pragmatism and intellectual idealism of the man who built it. Street-level stores generated income which helped to maintain the building. The rest of the space was devoted to uses benefiting the people of Woonsocket. The second floor "Sunday School" was not a religious institution, but a free school teaching reading and writing to mill workers on their day off. The school was soon superseded by the Harris Institute Library, the first free public library in Rhode Island. Harris Hall, on the third floor, was reputed to be the finest meeting room in the state. Lectures were an important form of education and entertainment in the mid-nineteenth century and many prominent speakers came to Harris Hall. The most famous was Abraham Lincoln who delivered a campaign address here on the night of March 6, 1860. Woonsocket's City Hall is the only building left in the state in which Lincoln spoke.

The Richardson<sup>ian</sup> Romanesque structure of 1891 and the 1856 Italianate Harris block form a melange of divergent styles, each reflecting the

See continuation sheet 1

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Chase, David W.; Woonsocket Statewide Preservation Report;  
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Providence, 1974.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

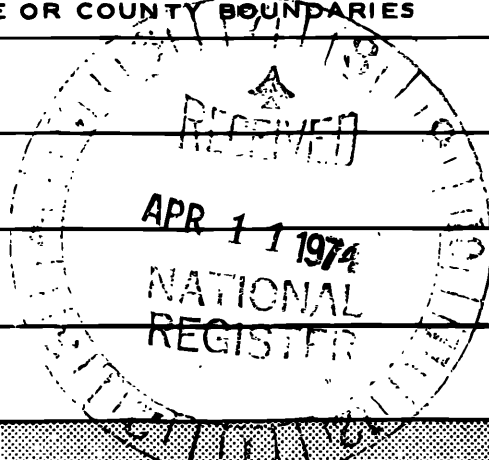
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		42° 00' 8.57"	71° 30' 52.94"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

VTM  
19/29/740  
4652880  
CD

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: less than 1 acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE:  
David W. Chase, Survey Director

ORGANIZATION: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

DATE: March 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:  
52 Power Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence

STATE: Rhode Island

CODE: 44

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**      **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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: Richard Williams

Title: State Historic Preservation Officer

Date: APR 1 1974

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

AR Quortensen  
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 5/1/74

ATTEST:

Wm. M. [Signature]  
Keeper of The National Register

Date: 5-1-74

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet) - 1

STATE Rhode Island	
COUNTY Providence	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
1	

(Number all entries) 7. Description cont.

Only one section of Harris Hall has been retained, functioning as the City Council Chamber. The second floor has been the home of the Harris Institute Free Library since 1863, but the library will soon move to new quarters and this space will be taken over for city offices. Until recently, most of the first floor was rented out. Now it too houses city offices.

At the time the front of the building was altered in 1891, a large addition was made on the north. This 1891 addition, looking like a separate building, is a stone-veneered four story structure in the Richardsonian Romanesque style. Its corner tower is a Main Street landmark. The first floor facade of both this addition and its extension across the first floor of the Harris Block have been faced with aluminum siding in the past two years.

The 1891 addition was built by the Trustees of the Harris Institute Library to whom Edward Harris had deeded the Harris Block in 1863.

In 1902 the trustees of Harris Institute transferred their property to the city. Since then the Harris Institute has been City Hall. The city government has recently determined to remain in its present quarters rather than building a new structure and now contemplates making extensive repairs on the complex.

8. Significance cont.

latest architectural fashion of the day. In 1902 the enlarged building now City Hall, was transformed from a primarily cultural institution into the political and administrative heart of Woonsocket. No structure has greater significance in the history of the city.

