

PH 0668281

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 5 1978 DATA SHEET  
DATE ENTERED AUG 17 1978NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Stonington High School

AND/OR COMMON

Borough School

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Church Street

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Stonington Borough

VICINITY OF

2nd

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Connecticut

06378

New London

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

\_\_DISTRICT

\_\_BUILDING(S)

 STRUCTURE

\_\_SITE

\_\_OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

 PUBLIC

\_\_PRIVATE

\_\_BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

\_\_IN PROCESS

\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

\_\_OCCUPIED

 UNOCCUPIED

\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

\_\_YES: RESTRICTED

 YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_NO

## PRESENT USE

\_\_AGRICULTURE

\_\_COMMERCIAL

\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_GOVERNMENT

\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_MILITARY

\_\_MUSEUM

\_\_PARK

\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_RELIGIOUS

\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_TRANSPORTATION

 OTHER: vacant**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Town of Stonington

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Town Hall, Elm Street

CITY, TOWN

Stonington

STATE

Connecticut

VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Town Hall, Town of Stonington

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Elm Street

CITY, TOWN

Stonington

STATE

Connecticut

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

State Register of Historic Places

DATE

1967

\_\_FEDERAL  STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Connecticut Historical Commission

CITY, TOWN

Hartford

STATE

Connecticut

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Stonington Borough School was built in 1888 on a site bereft of buildings and used for the Borough's general school. The site has now been developed on the west by Orchard Street, and on the north and south by Grand Street and Church Street, respectively. On a map of 1868, an area of several acres east of Calvary Episcopal Church was designated "Denison's Estate". Nearby fields were under cultivation and it is assumed that the building committee recognized the political advantages of a site that was quite remote from the Borough's population center, over a thousand feet west on Water Street.

The original building, on the western half of the lot, consists of a granite basement surmounted by two stories of brick, and a Mansard-roofed attic. The internal framing of the building is wooden. The roof consists of slate shingles in three bands, first horizontal, then diamond pattern, and again horizontal. The brick cornice is distinguished by inverted pyramidal dentils that provide a lively scalloped shadow, and a band of soldier courses of strong horizontal lines.

A central tower, extending an additional floor above the roof, housed the school bell. Windows of the two principal classroom floors are headed by low-rise arches and decorated by granite keystones and springstones. Minor windows in the tower are semi-circular arches. Cast-iron railings, purely ornamental, adorned the roof edge and the cornice of the porch; those on the porch remain in the older section.

The floor plan consists of a sixteen-foot-wide central corridor with two classrooms to the right, and two to the left. Rooms are roughly thirty feet by twenty-two feet, with a clear ceiling height of thirteen feet.

The apparent growth of the community called for a facility of larger size, and in 1903 the original building was nearly duplicated on the Eastern part of the lot, with a connecting link and stair well between them.

There are minor variations in details and dimensions between the old and new schools, but a great change in the appearance was effected by doubling the number of windows in the new building. In these few years, the stuffy, under-illuminated, poorly ventilated classroom was replaced by a more modern, open and spacious environment.

Although a half-dozen small residences dating from 1890 to 1900 face the playground of the school on the north, the land to the south and west remained open until the second decade of this century when Mr. Atwood, a manufacturer of silk machinery in Southington, built a large house directly to the south of the school. The neighborhood is still the least densely occupied part of the village.

The symmetry and compactness of the school's design which may be appreciated from many angles, including from the waters of Little Narragansett Bay and Fishers Island Sound, indicates the architect's awareness of the

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problem of adjusting the scale of the school to a small residential environment. Although the school must have seemed enormous at the time of its construction, overshadowing Richard Upjohn's Calvary Church on west, the open space around it, and the small scale of the wooden details of the entrance porch create an intimate residential atmosphere, compatible with the smaller houses of the village.

When a new high school building was opened in 1939 on a site midway between Westerly, Rhode Island and Stonington, Connecticut, the old Borough School was used only for elementary school instruction. Certain fireproofing and safety violations were remedied and the third floor was blocks off. The Borough School's exterior was very well maintained up until 1973 due to fond sentiment and support on the part of older residents who attended classes there and the competent management of the school. Now vacant, the building stands as a fine Second Empire monument and as a reminder of an era when students could, and did walk to a neighborhood school.

Although a larger area in Stonington is being considered for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places as a district, the Borough School is being disposed of by the Town of Stonington for rehabilitation as housing for the elderly and National Register listing will be advantageous to this plan.

# 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 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 1888

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Atwood W. Brayton and  
Lorenzo H. Lamb

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Borough School is a fine example of Late Victorian, Second Empire-style school architecture. The two parts of the existing structure were built some twenty years apart. They foreshadow the changes that were occurring in style and which resulted in a simpler form of architecture and the end of the Victorian ornamental era. In addition, the structure was the location for a consolidated high school which followed an early-20th-century trend towards the improvement of secondary education.

Situated on a spacious harbor, the village of Stonington in the Town of Stonington, Connecticut, prospered with shipping and shipbuilding. In 1801, it became the first incorporated Borough in the State of Connecticut. Whaling days brought more wealth, and in 1837 Stonington became a railroad terminal for Boston trains which met connecting steamers for New York. Throughout the 19th century, the Borough was a transportation center where busy wharves, supported by thriving railroad yards, welcomed the beautiful Long Island Sound steamships.

Major industry began in Stonington in 1876 when the Atwood Machine Company commenced manufacture of textile machinery. Prosperity increased in 1888 as Atwood received Japanese orders for silk machinery. Busy shops and markets lined Water Street. On the Borough's outskirts, thrifty dairy farmers organized a co-operative creamery. With this activity and affluence came the desire for finer things. The Stonington Free Library was established and the water company laid mains in the village.

It was in this prosperous setting that on March 3, 1888, district voters appropriated \$25,000 to replace the Borough's three small old schools with a large handsome three-story brick structure to be located on a beautiful tract bordering little Narragansett Bay. Contractors Atwood W. Brayton and Lorenzo Lamb had the new school ready for opening on September 16, 1889. The enrollment of 326 pupils encompassed the primary as well as the secondary grades.

The population explosion of the industrial age resulted in the crowding of the new school. In 1891, the American Velvet Company had come to the Borough and Atwood's work force increased. A boiler factory and foundry were bustling. In addition, the village became headquarters for a Portuguese fishing fleet. By 1900, the spacious school hall had to be partitioned off into classrooms to accommodate the increase.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Stonington Mirror (Weekly Newspaper) March 3, 1888 - May 5, 1888  
 Stonington Chronology by William Haynes reprint 1976

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY one

QUADRANGLE NAME Mystic Quadrangle

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1: 24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 19 257050 4579715

B                 
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C               

D               

E               

F               

G               

H               

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Located in the Borough of Stonington and bounded on the South by Church Street, on the West by Orchard Street, on the North by East Grand Street and on the East by Little Narragansett Bay, or the so-called Stonington East Harbor.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Robert J. Birmingham, Town Planner

ORGANIZATION

Planning and Zoning Commission Town of Stonington 10/31/77

STREET & NUMBER

Elm Street

TELEPHONE

535-2248

CITY OR TOWN

Stonington

STATE

Connecticut

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL X

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

*John W. Blumh*

TITLE Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

DATE 5/2/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*Charles H. ...*

DATE 8.17.78

ATTEST: *William ...*

DATE 8.17.78

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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In 1902, 602 pupils crowded into a school designed for half that number. "More room is absolutely necessary" thundered the editor of the Stonington Mirror on August 15, 1902. Four days later the district appropriated \$25,000 to construct a three-story eight-classroom brick addition. New York architect Wilson H. Potter prepared plans to harmonize with the existing structure, providing space for 400 more students. The contractors were William and Charles F. Jordan. The addition, opened in 1904, was hailed as "all that is up-to-date and new in a school house building" in the Stonington Mirror of December 25, 1903.

The addition's third floor, originally unfinished, was pressed into use. In 1910, in accordance with prevailing trends toward improvement of secondary education, the Town of Stonington's four scattered high school departments in Old Mystic, Mystic, Pawcatuck and the Borough were consolidated. This "union" high school opened at the Borough School in September of 1910 with 133 pupils occupying the entire second floor. The following June, six students graduated from the classical course and 14 from the general.

High School enrollment moved upward; the school's prestige increased as graduates were accepted by colleges. Tuition students came from the nearby towns of Groton and Ledyard. Athletics flourished also. The 1914 football team won the Eastern Connecticut Championship. In 1916, there were 44 graduates.

The tiny Borough's large brick school, besides housing a community grade school, served the whole Town of Stonington as a high school from 1910 to 1939, when the new Stonington High School, a WPA project, opened in Pawcatuck. Then, the old Borough School reverted to an elementary school, until a fire on March 13, 1973, caused the building's permanent closure.

Other differences between the two sections of the school building relate to the respective construction methods used between the two periods. Throughout the building, the hallways are defined by central load-carrying brick walls. In the older portion, a central pillar is used in each classroom for support. In the newer part, the open expanse of classroom and wider windows is made possible by heavier support beams, joists and walls.

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The 1888 wing, or westerly end of the school, shows many rich details that failed to appear in the newer, more "modern", wing to the east. The exterior differences are most easily noted by comparison of the mansard roofs of the top floors, associated slate roof shingles, and brick and wood work detailing of the older portion and the plain eastern wing, characterized by more modern, simpler lines and larger more spacious windows.

Fire damage was limited to the southeasterly classrooms on the first and second floors of the western portion of the building. The front of the central hallway in the older half of the building was badly burned and removed. Burned first and second floor joists were "shored-up" temporarily. Heat was conducted up a ventilating shaft, igniting some roof framing members; however, the roof structure has been stabilized. On June 16, 1974, another minor fire ignited in books and papers left within the school after the first fire. Since 1974, the Town of Stonington has spent \$35,000 clearing debris and securing the building against vandalism.

Although the present condition of the school remains sound overall because the extent of fire damage was limited to the southeast corner of the structure, the condition of the roof shows major deterioration and the entire building is continuously subject to water infiltration.