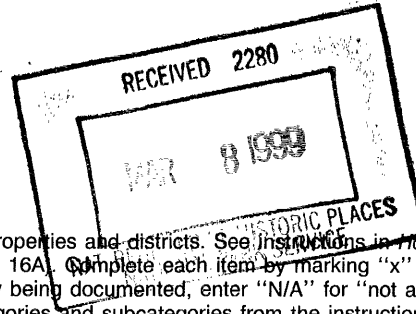


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



431

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name \_\_\_\_\_

other names/site number Jail Hill Historic District

2. Location

street & number See continuation sheet.  not for publication

city or town Norwich  vicinity

state Connecticut code CT county New London code 011 zip code 06360

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

John W. Shannahan 3/1/99  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
John W. Shannahan, Director, Connecticut Historical Commission

State of Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Beth A. Savage  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action  
4-19-99

Jail Hill Historic District  
Name of Property

New London, CT  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 74           | 33              | buildings  |
| 1            | 0               | sites      |
|              |                 | structures |
|              |                 | objects    |
| 75           | 33              | Total      |

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/multiple dwelling/secondary structure  
EDUCATION/school  
INDUSTRY/factory  
RECREATION/sports facility

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling/multiple dwelling/secondary structure

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19TH CENTURY/Greek Revival/Italian villa  
LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone/brick  
walls asphalt/asbestos/aluminum vinyl  
roof asphalt  
other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ETHNIC HERITAGE

SOCIAL HISTORY

~~ARCHITECTURE~~

**Period of Significance**

1828 - c. 1914

**Significant Dates**

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 37

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

|      |         |          |          |
|------|---------|----------|----------|
| 1    | 118     | 74361510 | 46015110 |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |          |
| 2    | 118     | 74371810 | 46013410 |

|      |         |          |            |
|------|---------|----------|------------|
| 3    | 118     | 74381310 | 4601091710 |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |            |
| 4    | 118     | 74341210 | 46010510   |

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By** \_\_\_\_\_ **Reviewed by John Herzan, National Register Coordinator**

name/title Jan Cunningham, National Register Consultant

organization Cunningham Preservation Associates, LLC date 8/10/98

street & number 37 Orange Road telephone (860) 347 4072

city or town Middletown state CT zip code 06457

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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

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Jail Hill Historic District, Norwich, New London County, Connecticut

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Location

**Cedar Street:** 1, 7, 15, 30, 34, 38, 40, 42, 46, 49, 50-52, 51, 53, 54, 55, 56, 59, 65,  
77, 81, 86, 110, 114, 118, 119, 121, 133.

**Fountain Street:** 9, 9 1/2, 16, 20 (vacant), 22, 24, Jail Site, 30, 36, 38, 39,  
40 (vacant), 41, 43, 50, vacant lot, 54, 59, 60-62, 61, 67-69, vacant  
lot, 74, 79, 88.

**Happy Street:** 8, 21, vacant lot, 31, 34, 35, 37, 38, 39.

**John Street:** 7, 9, 10, 18, 19, 21, 23 (vacant), 24, 42, 44.

**Old Division Street** (aka Fountain Street): 80, 84, 86.

**School Street:** 38, 46, 56, 59, 60, 61, 62, 64, 125, 132.

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Jail Hill Historic District, Norwich, New London County, Connecticut

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The Jail Hill Historic District, a historic working-class neighborhood, occupies a steep hill that rises above downtown Norwich and overlooks the harbor. Because the land drops off sharply around the perimeter of the hill, with actual cliffs to the south and east, the rugged terrain limits the extent of this neighborhood. In fact, adjacent downtown streets, such as Church and Union, are as much as 100 feet below the district (see attached map). Rising steeply from School Street, which runs along a terrace about 70 feet above the city, the district's principal roads, Cedar and Fountain streets, meet to the north of the 230-foot summit. John Street to the west follows a similar path and ends at Happy Street, the only connecting crossroad within the district.

The district contains 108 contributing and non-contributing resources, of which 75 are contributing (69 percent). Contributing resources date from 1828 to c. 1914, the period of significance of the district. They include 62 houses, three buildings converted to residential use, an academy, a factory, a bowling alley, two barns, and the jail site. The garages that were built after World War I comprise the majority of the non-contributing resources, but there are also several houses from this period and three deteriorated and/or severely altered historic buildings.

Residential construction began in the district in 1834 and was nearly complete by the end of the Civil War. The majority of the surviving houses (71 percent) date from that period and many of them are located on Jail Hill's southern slope. Most of the later houses were built in the last decade of the nineteenth century and located around the summit. In the 1830s a nucleus of a residential neighborhood was established on Cedar Street, probably the path of an old highway, followed by Fountain and School streets in the 1840s. The first houses appeared on John Street about 1850 and development continued there throughout the rest of the century.

The terrain imposes its own imperative on the district streetscapes. With few level lots, most houses have full-story stone or brick foundations on two or more elevations, according to the slope. In resulting north-south streetscapes, houses are stair-stepped up the slope, generally presenting gabled facades to the street. Many are sited at the front of deep narrow lots and clustered together in groups, which are often interspersed by open lots. On School Street, which runs east and west, the first story of houses on the south side is right at street level and there are exceptionally tall foundations at the rear. Conversely, tall buildings on the north side have high facade foundations and retaining walls at street level.

With a few notable exceptions, the district's modestly scaled houses are vernacular interpretations of three styles of the period: Greek Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne. Although there are a few masonry buildings, most houses are wood-framed and utilize either stone or brick foundations. It is likely that stone for foundations, retaining walls, and the border fences found throughout the district came from the immediate area. Few houses still display their original siding. Most of them (78 percent) are covered with synthetic materials, a trend that began in the early twentieth century, when asbestos or asphalt sidings were popular. Eighteen houses still display these older materials, but more than half are sided with vinyl. Since 1984, when the district was surveyed, older artificial sheathing has been removed from a few houses, revealing their original fabric, but, unfortunately, vinyl has replaced asphalt or asbestos in a number of cases.

Institutional development preceded most of the housing in the district. The first building was the imposing Classical Revival Norwich Female Academy (Inventory #108; Photograph #1). Overlooking the harbor from the south face of Jail Hill, it was located near a schoolhouse there (no longer extant). Built of brick in 1828, the academy has a

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National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
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Jail Hill Historic District, Norwich, New London County, Connecticut

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massive Doric-order portico. In 1834 the first Norwich Jail (from which the district takes its name) was built on a large lot that runs between Fountain and Cedar streets (Inventory #44). According to the 1984 survey, the site contains standing foundations ruins of the second building erected there in 1838 (demolished in the 1950s), as well as some border walls and iron fencing. Today the site is so overgrown that these features are not readily visible.

It is not surprising, given the development period of the district, that the predominate stylistic influence was Greek Revival. Thirty-five of the 45 houses built prior to 1870 display some degree of this style, and three distinct levels are apparent today. Therefore, for the purposes of this nomination, the following style nomenclature is used in the text and the inventory list.<sup>1</sup> Greek Revival as a term is reserved for those houses that display the most stylistic and architectural integrity. When modified by the term "vernacular," the typical gable-front form of this style is combined with one or more surviving details, such as cornice returns in lieu of a full pediment, pilasters, or a doorway with sidelights and transoms. Several Capes or other ridge-to-street houses also display Greek Revival features. The use of just the term "vernacular" for this period indicates houses that mimic the characteristic form and roof pitch of the Greek Revival, but display no stylistic detail.

One of most fully realized and earliest Greek Revivals in the district, the 1835 Reverend Seth B. Paddock House, was built near the academy (Inventory #4; Photograph #2). Accessed from lower Cedar Street, it presents its five-bay facade with a Doric-order portico towards the harbor. The 1847 Horace W. Jackson House at the foot of Fountain Street is another good example (Inventory #38; Photograph #3). In addition to its Greek Revival features, such as a full pediment and modified Corinthian-order portico, it has added Italianate-style elements, which include a roof dormer and a doorhood over the side entrance in the basement level of the south elevation. Around the corner to the west on School Street, several vernacular Greek Revivals also had high cellars and a similar tall pedimented form. Two built in 1847 have survived (Inventory #s 103, 105), but others nearby that also faced the harbor have been demolished.

A doorway with sidelights is the distinguishing feature of the Thomas B. Williams House (Inventory #53; Photograph #4) and the Patrick McKeirnan House (Inventory #62; Photograph #5); both examples of vernacular Greek Revival are on Fountain Street. One-story cottages, such as the neighboring Roger LeRay and George Barstow houses, are more common expressions of this style (Inventory #s 47, 49; Photograph #6). Nearly identical in form and detailing, they have broadly pitched roofs, corner pilasters, and frieze boards. However, the Barstow House is rotated so that the ridge of the roof runs parallel to the street. It also has a shouldered doorway surround and gable pediments instead of the simple cornice returns of its neighbor. A vernacular Greek Revival Cape built by James Trolen on Cedar Street has the same orientation (Inventory # 20; Photograph #7). Although the doorhood is Italianate, its Greek antecedents are expressed by the broad entablature under the eaves. Since the brick foundation projects at the corners, it is probable that pilasters were removed when vinyl siding was installed. At least two other similar Capes are found in the district (Inventory #s 27, 55).

Several houses exemplify the plain vernacular type of this period; they date from 1834 to 1854 and have the characteristic roof pitch of the Greek Revival style. Two found on School Street include the only brick example, which once had a full pediment (Inventory #s 100, 102; Photograph #8). A group of this type on lower Cedar Street are sheathed with vinyl and somewhat altered (Inventory #s 7, 9, 10, 11; Photograph #9), but vestiges of the Greek Revival form are evident in the first three. The last one in this row is

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Jail Hill Historic District, Norwich, New London County, Connecticut

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more vertical in form and has a steeper roof, which is typical of later vernacular Italianate and Queen Anne architecture of the district.

The Italianate style first surfaced on Cedar Street in 1847 with the Hebard-Gedulig House, located near the summit of Jail Hill (Inventory #26; Photograph #10). Constructed of brick in the Villa cube form, with overhanging eaves supported by brackets, it also has a Victorian porch with delicate sawn brackets, added in 1882. The property, which was owned by a florist, once included a number of historic greenhouses that were demolished when Glen Haven, a modern apartment complex, was built at the rear. Another later plain brick house of this form was built in 1859 on the west side of lower Cedar Street (Inventory #14; Photograph #11). The windows have stone lintels and segmental flared brick arches; the slightly recessed doorway has a transom and sidelights. As evidenced by the tall first-floor front windows, there once was porch there, which was removed sometime after 1984. Pintles for shutters still remain in place. Also depicted in Photograph #11 is a late example of the district's typical vernacular Italianate cottage, in which detailing was often limited to a doorhood (Inventory #13; Photograph #11).

The c. 1850 Charles Osgood House is the best-preserved Italianate cottage in the district (Inventory #36; Photograph #12). Transitional in style, it combines the round-arched windows of the Italianate with a Greek Revival doorway, set within a shouldered panelled surround, as well as a Victorian porch with spindles and sawn brackets. The Osgood Bowling Alley next door is an elongated one-story building now used as a residence (Inventory #37).

Two other cottages were mirror images when they were erected just down the street in 1859 by John Kingsley (Inventory #s 19, 21; Photograph #13). Both of these historic rental properties have single round-arched windows in the gable peak, now set within rectangular frames, and side porches supported by battered posts. The first Kingsley House (Inventory #19) still displays its dagged trim along the rakes and a bracketed doorhood. The hood on the other house may be still in place, but hidden under modern sheathing. Two later rentals were built by Kingsley on Fountain Street (Inventory #s 50, 52; Photograph #14). Sash replacement and alterations to the porches of these cottages do not obscure their vernacular form.

Most of the remaining houses in the district are vernacular expressions of the Queen Anne style, with the majority constructed between 1890 and 1900. The complex massing of form and plan usually associated with this style is reduced to simpler cross-gable or gable-to-street forms. An exceptional number have retained the open porches or verandas so characteristic of the Victorian period. Such is the case with the Hans Rasmussen and Patrick Curran houses, nearly identical turn-of-the-century buildings (Inventory #s 74, 68; Photograph #s 15, 16). Typically, their open verandas wrap across the facade and return to a slightly projecting gabled wing. Although both utilize a basic cross-gable form, the Rasmussen House differs in several ways. Because of its corner location at Happy and John streets, it has two facades, each with its own entrance. The veranda, with its more delicate turned posts and scroll-sawn brackets, conforms to the shape of the cutaway corner at the main entrance. The doorway in the wing facade displays a bracketed doorhood. Another style feature is the square multipaned Queen Anne window in the north elevation.

More commonly, an open porch is restricted to just the facade of the main block, the arrangement of the Catherine Mahoney House on John Street (Inventory #88; Photograph #17). Here gabled wings project from both sides. The Jeremiah Moran House to the south is only partially visible in the photograph (Inventory #87). Its simple rectangular



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Jail Hill Historic District, Norwich, New London County, Connecticut

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gabled form is more detailed with open vergeboards, as well as a facade porch. A similar house on the other side of the Mahoney House has been demolished.

One-story gabled houses were still popular at the turn of the century. Two typical examples are the Patrick Hallahan and Wilhelm Hamann houses on upper Cedar Street, which have slightly more complex plans with small wings on the side elevations (Inventory #s 30, 31; Photograph #18). Their higher roof plates allow for more headroom at the attic level. Both have open facade porches, but the turned posts on the Hallahan House have been replaced with open metal supports.

Among the few houses that display the more complex massing or details of the Victorian period is the Stick-style Cornelius McNamara House on School Street (Inventory #107; Photograph #19). Built in 1881, it rests on a very high brick foundation at the rear due to the steepness of the lot. Recent removal of asbestos siding has revealed original imbricated shingle and clapboard panels and unusual Eastlake detailing. Of particular note are the geometrically patterned screens with inset rows of bullseyes found under the projecting shed roof at the street-level entrance.

In 1886 John Mehan built a relatively elaborate Victorian Italianate with a cross-gable plan (Inventory #66; Photograph #20). Italianate features include molded window hoods and bracketed chamfered posts. The geometric spindle work on the porches may have been inspired by the earlier McNamara House, but the decorative spooled vergeboards and openwork truss of the facade gable are derived from the Carpenter Gothic style.

There was limited new residential construction in the district after the turn of the century. A Four-Square duplex on upper Fountain Street, built about 1910, retains its Colonial Revival dormer pediments and pedimented portico (Inventory #63; Photograph #5). The other is a late example of vernacular Queen Anne, erected about 1914 (Inventory #18), the last house built during the period of significance.

House construction resumed at the end of the Great Depression with two late Colonial Revivals (Inventory #s 1, 73). Built just prior to World War II, they essentially were the start of modern development in the district. The one at the foot of Cedar Street has an arched portico, its main stylistic feature. More recent development on Jail Hill has included several apartment buildings which are not part of the district. Several Ranch-style houses were built on the apparently previously undeveloped west side of lower Cedar Street (Inventory #s 15, 17).

In the following inventory list, all contributing and non-contributing resources in the district are listed alphabetically by street. Each is assigned an inventory number, which is used in the text and on the map of the district. Vacant lots, which are identified but not assigned an inventory number, include several where historic houses have been demolished. Historic names, which refer to the first known owner or tenant, and dates of construction are generally taken from the 1984 survey. Dates for buildings that were not surveyed and outbuildings were estimated in the field.

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Jail Hill Historic District, Norwich, New London County, Connecticut

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INVENTORY OF CONTRIBUTING AND NON-CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

| Inv. #       | Address   | Historic Name/Style/Type/Date   | C/NC | Photo # |
|--------------|-----------|---|------|---------|
| CEDAR STREET |           |   |      |         |
| 1.           | 1         | MARY C. SULLIVAN HOUSE, Colonial Revival, 1938                          | NC   |         |
| 2.           | 1         | garage, c. 1950   | NC   |         |
| 3.           | 7         | HENRY S. COOK HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1843                                | C    |         |
| 4.           | 15        | REV. SETH B. PADDOCK HOUSE, Greek Revival, 1835                         | C    | 2       |
| 5.           | 15        | barn/garage, c. 1900  | C    |         |
| 6.           | 15        | shed, c. 1900   | C    |         |
| 7.           | 30        | CHARLES H. HARRIS HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1836                            | C    | 9       |
| 8.           | 30        | garage, c. 1930   | NC   |         |
| 9.           | 34        | WILLIAM H. HARRIS HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1848                            | C    | 9       |
| 10.          | 38        | ELISHA WILLIAMS HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1834                              | C    | 9       |
| 11.          | 40        | MICHAEL BIRRACREE HOUSE, vernacular Italianate, c. 1854                 | C    | 9       |
| 12.          | 40        | garage, c. 1930   | NC   |         |
| 13.          | 42        | MICHAEL BIRRACREE COTTAGE,<br>vernacular Italianate, 1867               | C    | 11      |
| 14.          | 46        | JOSEPH CONNOR HOUSE #1, vernacular, c. 1859                             | C    | 11      |
| 15.          | 49        | Ranch, c. 1970  | NC   |         |
| 16.          | 50-52     | JOSEPH CONNOR HOUSE #2, vernacular, c. 1859                             | C    |         |
| 17.          | 51        | Ranch, c. 1960  | NC   |         |
| 18.          | 53 (rear) | FRANK CONELLI HOUSE (Jail farmhouse),<br>vernacular Queen Anne, c. 1914 | C    |         |
| 19.          | 54        | JOHN P. KINGSLEY HOUSE #1, vernacular<br>Italianate cottage, c. 1859    | C    | 13      |
| 20.          | 55        | JAMES TROLAN HOUSE, vernacular Greek Revival, c. 1849                   | C    | 7       |
| 21.          | 56        | JOHN P. KINGSLEY HOUSE #2, vernacular<br>Italianate cottage, c. 1859    | C    | 13      |
| 22.          | 59        | PATRICK KAIN HOUSE, vernacular Greek Revival, c. 1851                   | C    | 7       |
| 23.          | 59        | garage, c. 1920   | NC   |         |
| 24.          | 65        | PATRICK McGUINISS HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1849                            | C    |         |
| 25.          | 65        | garage, c. 1930   | NC   |         |
| 26.          | 77        | HEBARD-GEDULIG HOUSE, Greek Revival/Italianate, c. 1847                 | C    | 10      |
| 27.          | 81        | WILLIAM MURPHY HOUSE, vernacular Greek Revival, c. 1849                 | C    |         |

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|                        |       |   |    |    |
|------------------------|-------|---|----|----|
| 28.                    | 86    | WASHINGTON HALL, vernacular, c. 1840                                    | NC |    |
| 29.                    | 86    | garage, c. 1960   | NC |    |
| 30.                    | 110   | PATRICK HALLAHAN HOUSE, vernacular cottage, c. 1893                     | C  | 18 |
| 31.                    | 114   | WILHELM HAMANN HOUSE, vernacular cottage, c. 1890                       | C  | 18 |
| 32.                    | 114   | garage, c. 1930   | NC |    |
| 33.                    | 118   | WILHELM HAMANN HOUSE #2, vernacular, c. 1901                            | C  |    |
| 34.                    | 119   | JAMES J. CASEY HOUSE, vernacular cross-gable, c. 1901                   | C  |    |
| 35.                    | 119   | garage, c. 1930   | NC |    |
| 36.                    | 121   | CHARLES OSGOOD COTTAGE,<br>Italianate/Greek Revival vernacular, c. 1850 | C  | 12 |
| 37.                    | 133   | OSGOOD BOWLING ALLEY, c. 1850   | C  |    |
| <b>FOUNTAIN STREET</b> |       |   |    |    |
| 38.                    | 9     | HORACE W. JACKSON HOUSE, Greek Revival/Italianate, c. 1847              | C  | 3  |
| 39.                    | 9 1/2 | JACKSON BARN/JOSEPH J. WOOD HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1844                  | C  |    |
| 40.                    | 16    | JOHN MAY HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1847                                     | C  |    |
| 41.                    | 16    | garage, c. 1930   | NC |    |
|                        | 20    | vacant (house gone)   |    |    |
| 42.                    | 22    | JOHN FOX HOUSE #2, vernacular, c. 1846                                  | C  |    |
| 43.                    | 24    | JOHN FOX HOUSE #1, vernacular, c. 1842                                  | C  |    |
| 44.                    | --    | Jail site, 1838-c. 1950   | C  |    |
| 45.                    | 30    | OLIVER S. COOMBS HOUSE, vernacular Greek Revival, c. 1851               | C  |    |
| 46.                    | 30    | garage, c. 1940   | NC |    |
| 47.                    | 36    | ROGER P. LeRAY HOUSE, vernacular Greek Revival, c. 1848                 | C  | 6  |
| 48.                    | 36    | shed, c. 1930   | NC |    |
| 49.                    | 38    | GEORGE BARSTOW HOUSE, Greek Revival, c. 1848                            | C  | 6  |
| 50.                    | 39    | JOHN P. KINGSLEY HOUSE #3, vernacular, c. 1869                          | C  | 14 |
| 51.                    | 39    | garage, c. 1930   | NC |    |
|                        | 40    | vacant (house gone)   |    |    |
| 52.                    | 41    | JOHN P. KINGSLEY HOUSE #4, vernacular, c. 1869                          | C  | 14 |
| 53.                    | 43    | THOMAS B. WILLIAMS HOUSE, vernacular Greek Revival, c. 1849             | C  | 4  |
| 54.                    | 43    | garage. c. 1920   | NC |    |
| 55.                    | 50    | ALBERT G. WARREN HOUSE #1, vernacular<br>Greek Revival, c. 1847         | C  |    |
| 56.                    | 50    | barn, late 19th-century   | C  |    |

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|                     |       |  |    |    |
|---------------------|-------|--|----|----|
| --                  |       | vacant lot (east side)                                     |    |    |
| 57.                 | 54    | WALKER-CARRINGTON HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1847               | NC |    |
| 58.                 | 59    | RICHARD McFADDEN HOUSE (formerly 2 outbuildings), c. 1869  | C  |    |
| 59.                 | 59    | garage, c. 1930  | NC |    |
| 60.                 | 60-62 | THOMAS McGARRY HOUSE, vernacular, 1889                     | C  |    |
| 61.                 | 60-62 | garage, c. 1930  | NC |    |
| 62.                 | 61    | PATRICK McKIERNAN HOUSE, vernacular Greek Revival, c. 1852 | C  | 5  |
| 63.                 | 67-69 | MARGARET M. MEEHAN HOUSE, Four-Square duplex, c. 1910      | C  | 5  |
| 64.                 | 67-69 | garage, c. 1940  | NC |    |
| --                  |       | vacant lot (east side)                                     |    |    |
| 65.                 | 74    | CHARLES W. CORCORAN HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1895             | C  |    |
| 66.                 | 79    | JOHN MEHAN HOUSE, Italianate/Carpenter Gothic, 1886        | C  | 20 |
| 67.                 | 79    | barn/garage, c. 1900/c. 1930                               | C  |    |
| 68.                 | 88    | PATRICK CURRAN HOUSE, vernacular Queen Anne, c. 1898       | C  | 16 |
| 69.                 | 88    | garage, c. 1935  | NC |    |
| <b>HAPPY STREET</b> |       |  |    |    |
| 70.                 | 8     | RICHARD McFADDEN HOUSE #2, vernacular Queen Anne, c. 1890  | C  |    |
| 71.                 | 8     | garage, c. 1930  | NC |    |
| 72.                 | 21    | JAMES STANLEY HOUSE, vernacular, 1868, 1886                | C  |    |
| --                  |       | vacant lot (north side)                                    |    |    |
| 73.                 | 31    | LEONE HOUSE, Colonial Revival, c. 1940                     | NC |    |
| 74.                 | 34    | HANS RASMUSSEN HOUSE, vernacular Queen Anne, c. 1900       | C  | 15 |
| 75.                 | 34    | garage, c. 1930  | NC |    |
| 76.                 | 35    | ALBERT G. WARREN HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1847                | C  |    |
| 77.                 | 37    | JOHN CHARLTON HOUSE #2, vernacular, c. 1848                | C  |    |
| 78.                 | 38    | Bungalow, c. 1920  | NC |    |
| 79.                 | 39    | JOHN CHARLTON HOUSE #3, vernacular, c. 1860                | C  |    |
| 80.                 | 39    | garage, c. 1960  | NC |    |
| <b>JOHN STREET</b>  |       |  |    |    |
| 81.                 | 7     | JOHN O'HEARN HOUSE, vernacular cottage, c. 1851            | C  |    |
| 82.                 | 9     | DENNIS J. MORAN HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1897                 | C  |    |
| 83.                 | 10    | STEPHEN R. TIFT HOUSE, vernacular cross-gable, c. 1850     | C  |    |
| 84.                 | 18    | MARGARET A. SMITH HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1900               | C  |    |

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|  |     |   |    |    |
|--|-----|---|----|----|
| 85.  | 18  | garage, c. 1930   | NC |    |
| 86.  | 18  | garage, c. 1930   | NC |    |
| 87.  | 19  | JEREMIAH MORAN HOUSE, vernacular Queen Anne, c. 1898                | C  | 17 |
| 88.  | 21  | CATHERINE MAHONEY HOUSE, vernacular Queen Anne, 1895                | C  | 17 |
|  | 23  | vacant (house gone)   |    |    |
| 89.  | 24  | RICHARDETTA WILSON HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1896                       | C  |    |
| 90.  | 42  | vernacular, c. 1900   | C  |    |
| 91.  | 44  | Cape, c. 1950   | NC |    |
| <b>OLD DIVISION STREET (now an extension of FOUNTAIN STREET)</b> |     |   |    |    |
| 92.  | 80  | CALEB NOYES POPCORN FACTORY, c. 1871                                | C  |    |
| 93.  | 80  | shed, c. 1950   | NC |    |
| 94.  | 84  | Ranch, c. 1950  | NC |    |
| 95.  | 86  | Cape, c. 1950   | NC |    |
| <b>SCHOOL STREET</b>   |     |   |    |    |
| 95.  | 38  | ELDRIDGE E. ALLEN HOUSE, vernacular Greek Revival, c. 1845          | C  |    |
| 96.  | 46  | THOMAS McDONALD HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1850                          | C  |    |
| 98.  | 46  | shed, c. 1900   | C  |    |
| 99.  | 56  | HUBBEL TALCOTT HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1846                           | C  |    |
| 100.   | 59  | JAMES LINDSLEY SMITH HOUSE, vernacular, c. 1843                     | C  | 8  |
| 101.   | 60  | CATHERINE GLEASON HOUSE, late 19th-c. vernacular, c. 1894           | C  |    |
| 102.   | 61  | JOHN HALLIDAY HOUSE, vernacular/Gothic Revival, c. 1835             | C  | 8  |
| 103.   | 62  | GAMALIEL M. WELSH HOUSE, Greek Revival, c. 1847                     | C  |    |
| 104.   | 62  | shed, c. 1900   | C  |    |
| 105.   | 64  | FANNING & WILLOUGHBY TENEMENT,<br>vernacular Greek Revival, c. 1847 | C  |    |
| 106.   | 64  | shed, c. 1900   | C  |    |
| 107.   | 125 | CORNELIUS McNAMARA HOUSE, Stick, 1881                               | C  | 19 |
| 108.   | 132 | NORWICH FEMALE ACADEMY, Classical Revival, 1828                     | C  | 1  |

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**Statement of Significance**

A rare example of a nineteenth-century hilltop community developed by and for the working class, the Jail Hill Historic District is distinguished primarily by its significant African-American associations. Members of the Jail Hill community played prominent roles in the black abolition movement and are directly associated with one of the more defining moments of Connecticut's abolitionist history, the cause célèbre generated by the presence of African American students at the Prudence Crandall School in Canterbury. With the arrival of Irish immigrants who flocked to Norwich in the 1840s, the district continued to develop in comparative social and physical isolation, but its history remained intertwined with the growth of nineteenth-century Norwich. The district's collection of generally modest vernacular houses still embodies these significant historical associations and, despite some loss of integrity, continues to convey a distinct sense of time and place.

**Historical Background**

Prior to European settlement, Jail Hill was the domain of the Mohegan tribe. Allies of the English in the defeat of the Pequots in 1637, the Mohegans held supremacy in eastern Connecticut, which was challenged only by the Narragansetts of Rhode Island. To maintain dominance of the region, the tribe fortified and occupied this strategic location overlooking the confluence of the Yantic, Shetucket, and Thames rivers.

Jail Hill was part of the nine square miles that Uncas, chief sachem of the Mohegans, sold to English settlers from Saybrook in 1659. The first settlement was located at Norwichtown to the north; land between the Shetucket and Yantic rivers where downtown Norwich stands today was held in common as a sheepwalk. Although there was some development at this natural harbor by the late 1600s, and a highway laid out over the hill to Norwichtown, this area was used for pasturage until 1726. Soon after its distribution to the proprietors in 1734, a thriving riverport was established at what was then known as Chelsea. The old highway was abandoned, replaced by roads on either side of the hill, present-day Washington and Union streets.

Jail Hill, which was owned by two proprietor families, the Tylers and the Kinneys, remained totally undeveloped until the early 1800s. At that time a schoolhouse was erected near the east end of present-day School Street. The Norwich Female Academy built nearby in 1828 soon had an enrollment of 90 pupils. Historian Frances Manwaring Caulkins, who taught there, touted the delights of its rural setting and the remarkable vistas from this rugged hill, perhaps with the hope of attracting good neighbors, but soon there were plans to build the county jail there, clearly not a compatible institution. Although local historians do not make an explicit connection, it was probably no coincidence that the academy closed within a few years.

Norwich had been a half-shire town since 1734, with a townhouse and jail on Norwichtown Green. By the early 1800s, however, the riverport at Chelsea was the major population center and began to assume the institutional functions of the town and county seat. In 1829 a new townhouse, which also served as a county courthouse, was constructed downtown, near the site of the present court building. The southern slope of Jail Hill was selected for the jail, a convenient site near the courthouse, but one not actually in the downtown. Apparently no one recognized that the looming presence of such an institution would set the course of all future historic development on the hill. In most nineteenth-century cities, a summit with such splendid views was the usual preserve of the wealthy. In Norwich industrialists built their estates to the west and north, leaving Jail Hill to the city's poor and disadvantaged, who in early nineteenth-century Connecticut were

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African Americans. As a group, they were denied the rights of citizenship and access to the economic and educational opportunities routinely enjoyed by white society.

**Historical Significance**

Since colonial Norwich was a major riverport with direct access to the sea, local merchants involved in the West Indies trade undoubtedly imported slaves from the Caribbean. When compared to colonies in the South, there were relatively few slaves in colonial Connecticut, but the black population rose from about 3000 in 1750 to 5000 on the eve of the Revolution.<sup>2</sup> In 1774, when the importation of slaves into the colony was banned, there were 243 blacks in Norwich, which represented only 3.2 percent of the city's population. At that time the town was the second largest in the state but only ranked fifth in the number of black residents. The majority were still slaves, employed as domestic servants or manual laborers, but some former slaves were mariners or skilled craftsmen. Although manumission had been discouraged by a 1702 act of the General Assembly, some slaves were freed by testamentary devices when owners died.<sup>3</sup> Those who had a trade, such as Guy Drock, a blacksmith who built a house on Church Street in 1759, could earn their freedom.

The Revolution forced many to examine the inherent contradiction of slavery in a free democratic society. After the war, a series of state laws were passed which gradually abolished slavery. By 1830 only 23 slaves remained in Connecticut and in 1848 slavery was totally abolished in the state. Anti-slavery societies that sprang up in this period, both black and white, agreed on universal emancipation but had other fundamental philosophical differences. African Americans in the North worked for suffrage and improved educational opportunities for their own people, while Northern whites focussed on political opposition to the spread of slavery into frontier states. Though that work was important, it did little to improve conditions for free blacks in their home states. There was some agreement on the goal of another organization, the American Colonization Society, which promoted the return of freed blacks to Africa. Founded in the South in 1816, it quickly found supporters among Northern abolitionists.

Many Northern black ministers worked hard for education and equal rights and some assistance and support was provided by white religious groups. In Norwich a member of the Second Congregational Church, located on Church Street just below the hill, started a Sabbath school for blacks in 1815. When it was incorporated as the Union Sabbath School Society the following year, the Episcopal Church was also a sponsor. Enrollment by 1817 was 23 adults and children. Classes in literacy and religion were held in the schoolhouse on Jail Hill. A number of Norwich's black community joined the Second Congregational Church, an association that continued for the rest of the century. Among them were members of the Williams and Harris families, the first residents of Jail Hill and leaders in the abolition movement.

At this time, few African Americans in Norwich, or indeed, anywhere in Connecticut, had a hope of owning their own homes; only the depressed property values on Jail Hill made it possible. One of the earliest residential lots on lower Cedar Street was sold for just \$30 to Peggy Williams, probably the first member of the black community in the district. Although her house, valued at just \$250 at her death, is gone, other houses associated with her family still stand nearby. Among them was one built by her son Elisha Williams (Inventory #10; Photograph #9), who listed his occupation as cook, and another by Thomas Williams, a carpenter, on Fountain Street in 1849 (Inventory #53; Photograph #4). The Williams family were active abolitionists. George was a delegate to the 1849 Connecticut Convention of Colored Men; Pelluman Williams served as vice president at that conference. Julia Williams, once a pupil of Prudence Crandall, taught at the integrated Noyes Academy

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in New Hampshire. She married Henry Highland Garnet, an abolitionist minister who also taught there. Garnet, a leader in the black abolition movement, perhaps best known for his plan to provide land in upper New York State to former Southern slaves, later became the U. S. minister to Liberia.

The first member of the Harris family to come to Norwich was William Monteflore Harris, Sr., who was born in the French West Indies in 1783 and came to the United States for an education. After a brief sojourn in New London, Harris moved to Norwich, where he married Sally Prentice of Preston. Although Harris bought a lot on Broadway from Calvin Goddard, a local attorney, it is not known where he actually lived before he moved to Canterbury. His eldest son Charles stayed in Norwich and later ran a restaurant on Water Street downtown. By 1836 he lived at 30 Cedar Street next door to his brother William, a ship's cook on the *Cleopatra* (Inventory #s 7, 9; Photograph #9).

In 1832 William Harris, Sr., and Charles were subscription agents for *The Liberator*, an abolitionist newspaper, first published by William Lloyd Garrison the previous year. Although aimed at Northern whites, many urban blacks in the North were subscribers of this influential journal. An advocate of immediate rather than gradual emancipation, Garrison was opposed to the goals of the American Colonization Society and many credit him with the decline of that movement.

A series of circumstances embroiled Charles Harris in the Prudence Crandall affair. In 1832 Charles was engaged to Ann Marcia Davis, a servant of Prudence Crandall. At that time Crandall ran one of the typical exclusively white academies of the period in her home in Canterbury, which she had purchased for this purpose in 1831. It is said that Harris brought *The Liberator* and Garrison to Crandall's attention but more importantly, having persuaded Crandall to enroll his sister Sarah as a student, he was the unwitting catalyst for the controversy that soon erupted. Faced with opposition from white parents, who threatened to withdraw their children, Crandall temporarily closed the school. After consulting with Garrison, Crandall was determined to reopen as a boarding school for black females. To this end she advertised in *The Liberator* and travelled to major cities to recruit students. When the school reopened in April 1833, four students came from Norwich's black community, Sarah Harris and her sister Mary, Julia Williams, and Eliza Glasko. Harrassed by her neighbors and jailed in violation of Connecticut's infamous "Black Law,"<sup>4</sup> Crandall endured two court trials and an appeal to the State Supreme Court. She was represented by three white attorneys, including Norwich's own Calvin Goddard. Since her case was thrown out on a technicality, no legal determination of the constitutionality of the law was ever made and Crandall continued to run her school. However, in 1834, after attempted arson and mob violence threatened the safety of her students, Crandall gave up her grand effort to provide equal educational opportunities for black females and closed her school for good.

Ironically, within a few years young black women could attend Norwich Free Academy. They included two daughters of James Lindsley Smith, another resident of Jail Hill (Inventory #100; Photograph #8). Born into slavery in Virginia, Smith escaped in 1838 and made his way to Springfield, Massachusetts, where he became a Methodist minister. After moving to Norwich, he bought the house on School Street in 1845, and worked as a shoemaker downtown. Another delegate to the State Convention in 1849, Smith wrote a remarkable autobiography, *Five Black Lives*, which was published in 1881 and reprinted in 1976.

Other African Americans lived in the district but only a few of their homes have been identified. The Reverend William Spelman lived south of Peggy Williams on Cedar Street, presumably on the jail lot, but his home has not survived. Like two of Peggy's sons, he was a delegate to the State Convention in 1849. James Spelman, his son, born in Norwich



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in 1841, became a noted writer for black journals and white newspapers, and when he was an educator in Mississippi, a correspondent for the *New York Tribune*.

Even though a few African Americans continued to make their home there, by the 1850s the district was becoming predominately Irish. With the exception of Jacob Benjamin, Harris' son-in-law, who stayed on in that house after Charles died (Inventory #7), most of the original group had died or sold their homes to Irish immigrants and moved away. Several of those who came there later lived on Fountain Street: Sarah Law at #30 (Inventory #45); and George W. Bruce, who was in the restaurant business with Charles Harris, in the LeRay House next door (Inventory #47). Castilla Brown, who ran a restaurant and confectionary downtown, lived in one of John Charlton's rental houses on Happy Street (Inventory #79) and earlier may have rented a house on School Street. By the end of the century the Walkers and the Carringtons occupied the Albert Warren House and one next door, both still owned by Alexander Carrington in 1984 (Inventory #s 55, 57).

The diminishing black presence in the district can be attributed to a number of factors. Despite the sympathy and support extended locally by individual whites, especially members of the Second Congregational Church, in general African Americans made little social or economic progress in *antebellum* Connecticut. Employment opportunities were limited, especially in the cities, and by the late 1840s, urban blacks were competing with Irish immigrants for the same low-paying unskilled jobs. In Norwich the rapid expansion of the textile industry had created a demand for factory workers, but few companies hired blacks. Although no direct prejudice was recorded, the general public was ambivalent in its attitudes. Mobs did break up anti-slavery meetings in Norwich and local newspapers often came out against abolition. Some of this negative response can be attributed to the city's industrial ties to the Deep South, a market that was disrupted by the Civil War. In 1863 an editorial in Norwich's *Aurora* declared President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation to be the "culmination of his stupidity." Even after the Civil War, segregated schools remained the norm in the state and suffrage was still denied.

At that time, concerned philanthropists and educators of both races were working to improve conditions for former slaves in the Deep South. Some descendants of Jail Hill families moved there to teach and helped found schools, including the daughters of James Smith, Pelluman Williams and his wife, the former Mary Harris, and James J. Spelman. Among the white residents of Norwich who worked in the South was Edmund Ware, who helped found Atlanta University. August Wattles worked in Ohio and promoted the integration of several colleges there. John Fox Slater, a Norwich industrialist, established a million-dollar endowment, which distributed more than \$400,000 to 36 black colleges.

Driven out of Ireland by the potato famines of the 1840s, the Irish became the dominant ethnic group in nineteenth-century Connecticut. In 1824 there was only one Irishman in Norwich but by 1866 there were 4000 Irish, creating a city-wide housing demand. Some housing was available in Norwich in the planned industrial village of Greenville, but with the exception of Jail Hill, there was little land available elsewhere in the city. By mid-century so many of Norwich's downtown businessmen were developing properties there that real estate prices escalated. This second wave of development in the district was considerably different. Although there was little change in the general appearance and scale of the housing stock, instead of the owner-occupied homes of the black community, most of the new houses were built to rent to Irish families. Some tenants eventually bought these houses, but so few could afford them, in most cases they remained rental properties until after the Civil War.

At least 17 investment properties and their developers have been identified. Stephen Tift, an oyster dealer who lived on lower Washington Street, built several houses on the

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hill and three have survived (Inventory #s 83, 96, 102; Photograph #8). John Kingsley, a local butcher, built four more, two on Cedar Street (Inventory #s 19, 21; Photograph #13), and two on Fountain Street (Inventory #s 50, 52; Photograph #14). John Charlton, a tailor by trade, invested in property on Happy Street (Inventory #s 77, 79) and constructed several on School Street that are no longer extant. Joseph Connor, an Irish merchant, built two houses on Cedar Street (Inventory #s 14, 16; Photograph #11) and he may have lived in the larger brick one. A later developer, Charles Osgood, a druggist, erected his bowling alley on Cedar Street and built a house next door for the alley manager (Inventory #s 36, 37; Photograph #12). Within a few years Osgood built two more houses nearby (Inventory #s 34, 68; Photograph #16). Among several tenements built by Fanning & Willoughby, a local construction firm, are two of the surviving Greek Revivals on School Street (Inventory #s 103, 105).

A few rental properties were erected by people who lived in the district. John Fox, who made his home on Fountain Street, built a second house on the property for rental income (Inventory #42, 43). Michael Birracree, an Irish gardener, constructed his own vernacular Italianate house on Cedar Street and the small rental cottage next door (Inventory #s 11, 13; Photograph #s 9, 11).

Few achieved the middle-class status of merchant John Connor, but many Irish immigrants were skilled workers.<sup>5</sup> Only two listed themselves as laborers, and one of them owned his home. The building trades were represented by one carpenter and three masons/stonecutters. A moulder and a mechanic worked at factory jobs which were on a par with skilled positions held by native-born residents of the district. Many Irishmen were gardeners and coachmen. Directories often identified their employers, usually owners of the larger estates west and north of Jail Hill. There must have been quite a demand for gardeners since even the prisoners at the jail were trained in floriculture.

Patrick Hallahan, who lived in a modest cottage on Cedar Street, was the gardener for an estate at 188 Washington Street. His immediate neighbor, Wilhelm Hamann, one of several German immigrants on Jail Hill engaged in this occupation, had charge of the landscaping at 197 Broadway. He later was able to build a house for rent next door to his home (Inventory #33). Richard McFadden, another Irishman, started out as a gardener and became a coachman, clearly a rise in status. His upward mobility, both literal and figurative, can be traced in the district. He moved from his first home, a rental flat in a tenement on School Street (Inventory #105), to a house he cobbled together from two outbuildings halfway up Fountain Street in 1869 (Inventory #58). In 1890 he was able to build his own vernacular Queen Anne on Happy Street near the crest of the hill (Inventory #70).

In a city known as the Rose of New England, horticulture had a special importance. Since the nineteenth century, an annual Rose Festival there has featured a rose parade complete with flower-bedecked floats, an event with a direct association with the district. Gustave Gedulig, a German immigrant, ran a large florist business on Cedar Street with eight steam-heated greenhouses on the two-acre property. The basement of the fine brick house he bought there was outfitted with coolers and arranging tables (Inventory # 26; Photograph #10). Until his death in 1895, Gedulig's float was the highlight of the parade every year. The business, which employed many local people, was run by his family until the 1960s.

Although some in the Irish community on Jail Hill supported the cause of Irish nationalism, for the most part their concerns were local and immediate.<sup>6</sup> Together with their neighbors, they tried to improve living conditions on the hill, submitting a series of generally unsuccessful petitions to the Norwich City Council. People petitioned about

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the lack of streetlights, sewers, fire protection, and sidewalks to no avail. For many citizens of Norwich, especially those in residence there, even the name of the district was a disgrace. That cause was even publicized in the *Norwich Bulletin* in the 1880s, but nothing came of efforts to have the name changed. When Richard McFadden led a group asking for more police protection, he was appointed resident constable, but the neighborhood was generally left to fend for itself for most of the nineteenth century. City officials only really responded in extreme situations. For years a major controversy concerned the lack of maintenance of the steep footpaths that were the district's only access to downtown. After a lawsuit was brought for injuries sustained in a fall, a retaining wall was constructed in 1874. When a team of horses plunged over the cliff at the foot of Cedar Street, an iron railing was erected on top of the wall.<sup>7</sup>

For much of its history the Jail Hill Historic District has been isolated from the urban mainstream as much by its terrain as by prevailing cultural attitudes. It began as a haven for disadvantaged African Americans who rose above prejudice and poverty to make significant contributions to the cause of black equality well beyond the borders of Norwich. Its transition to an ethnic immigrant neighborhood may be less remarkable, yet the district still illustrates how such a discrete social universe evolved into a true community over time. Today the same solidarity and sense of community is found in the Jail Hill Association, which works to preserve its architectural heritage. The problems it faces, disinvestment, and deterioration and demolition of housing stock, so common in urban neighborhoods, threaten the future integrity and cohesiveness of the district. Some progress had been made. Many residents take pride in their homes and a number of buildings show signs of recent rehabilitation. There is a preservation plan for the community. Its full-scale implementation will help assure the continued viability of a district that holds a unique place in Norwich and Connecticut history.

**Architectural Significance**

The Jail Hill Historic District rises above downtown Norwich, a distinctive Old World setting for a New England nineteenth-century urban neighborhood. Indeed, were it not for the decidedly American vernacular architecture that clings to its steep slopes, this urban enclave would evoke the walled hilltowns of Europe. Confined and defined by its topography, which adds to its cohesiveness, the district is not a planned community, but one that evolved in a limited time frame, largely in response to external and internal socio-economic factors. Drawing upon just three nineteenth-century architectural trends, Greek Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne, the district's architectural collection is unified by similarities of form, scale, orientation, and level of style.

In the main, the district is an honest reflection of its working-class origins. In fact, while there are several buildings that stand out for a higher level of stylistic integrity, vernacular styles prevail. They are freely interpreted and may combine several stylistic influences. In a period characterized by rapid stylistic change, styles typically lingered on in the district well after they were superseded elsewhere, reflecting the generally conservative nature of the vernacular. Nevertheless, the technological advances of the nineteenth century that made stylish millwork available for homes of the working and middle classes are everywhere evident, further defining the historical period of the district. For better or worse, over time there have been changes to these houses: some have been restored; in others, only the form still conveys their age or stylistic derivation. Unfortunately, the latter condition is often true for the Greek Revival period, when most of the houses were built.

Yet a number of vernacular Greek Revivals still retain key style elements, such as cornice returns and pilasters, and a few have fully detailed doorways like the ones on

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the houses built for Thomas Williams and Patrick McKiernan (Inventory #s 43, 62; Photograph #s 4, 5). In the Seth Paddock and Horace Jackson houses, similar entrances are sheltered by quite stylish columned porticos (Inventory #s 4, 38; Photograph #s 2, 3). A few Greek Revivals were built or updated with Italianate doorhoods, as was the case with the James Trolan House (Inventory #20; Photograph #7).

A remarkable number of houses have retained their open facade porches, a feature, perhaps more than any other, that clearly conveys the period of the district. They were an added or integral part of both houses and cottages, including some dating from the Greek Revival period like the Roger LeRay and George Barstow houses (Inventory #s 47, 49; Photograph #6). More detailed porches are found on the well-preserved Charles Osgood Cottage and the Hebard-Gedulig House (Inventory #s 36, 26; Photograph #s 12, 10). The Osgood Cottage, which displays Italianate round-arched paired windows and a Greek Revival doorway with a shouldered surround, illustrates the transitional nature of the district's vernacular architecture at mid-century. With its bracketed villa form, the Hedbard-Gedulig House, constructed of brick in 1847, more fully embraced the Italianate. Enhanced by its well-preserved Victorian porch, it remains today the finest and earliest expression of this style in the district.

Porches were an integral part of the design of two of the more stylish buildings in the district, the Cornelius McNamara and John Mehan houses (Inventory #s 107, 66; Photograph #s 19, 20). Exceptionally well-preserved, these houses display a greater wealth of detail. For example, the Mehan House utilizes both machined millwork and handcrafted detail in its decorative facade truss and spindlework. The recently restored McNamara House effectively illustrates how a variety of wall claddings as well as relatively intricate detailing individualizes an otherwise simple late nineteenth-century form.

Porches or verandas were the universal style feature of the vernacular Queen Annes that followed. Typically they were elaborated with stock millwork, which was readily available at that time. Among them were the well-preserved cross-gable houses built for Hans Rasmussen and Catherine Mahoney at the turn of the century (Inventory #s 74, 88; Photograph #s 15, 17). More simply executed, but still well-preserved is the veranda of the Patrick Curran House (Inventory #68; Photograph #16).

End Notes:

1. In the 1983-84 survey on which this nomination is based, stylistic differentiation for this period was limited to just "Greek Revival" or "vernacular Greek Revival." However, the latter term seemed to be an overstatement for those cases where only the form remains, even granting the possibility that some of these houses may once have displayed more detail. Other later styles, such as Italianate and Queen Anne, were similarly designated in the survey, but the same distinctions between style, vernacular style, and just plain vernacular were applied here.
2. For these numbers and other population statistics found throughout Item 8, see the overview text and the supplemental essay on black history in the 1984 survey report. Specific information about individual African Americans was taken from that essay and from Barbara W. Brown and James Rose, *Black Roots in Southeastern Connecticut*, 1980.
3. The law required that former owners continue to be responsible for freed slaves so they did not become a public charge.

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4. This legislation, which was instigated by Canterbury citizens and only remained on the books for five years, made it illegal for out-of-state black students to attend schools in Connecticut.

5. Occupations were taken from individual inventory forms compiled for the 1984 survey. The original sources for this information were city directories and/or federal censuses.

6. It is said that a Captain McDonald, who lived in the district, was the leader of a group of 60 local men who participated in the failed Fenian invasion of Canada in 1866.

7. Even today the steepness of the hill is a problem and a new wall was recently built there.

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**9. Major Bibliographic References**

Brown, Barbara W. and James W. Rose. *Black Roots in Southeastern Connecticut, 1650-1900*. Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1980.

Fuller, Edmund. *Prudence Crandall: An Incidence of Racism in Nineteenth Century Connecticut*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1971.

*Norwich City Directory*, 1849 - 1930.

Plummer, Dale S. and John M. Jail Hill Historical and Architectural Survey. Norwich Heritage Trust and Connecticut Historical Commission, 1984.

**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The district boundaries are shown on the attached district map drawn to scale from a map provided by the Norwich Planning Department.

**Boundary Justification:**

The boundaries were drawn to encompass the maximum number of surviving contributing resources associated with the historic development of the Jail Hill Historic District (1828-c. 1914), and to exclude non-contributing resources and/or vacant land along the perimeter. The steep slopes of Jail Hill that limited the extent of this historic neighborhood (see Item #7) still generally define the boundaries of the district today, with the following adjustments. As drawn, the selected boundary excludes a portion of the east side of Cedar Street, which is the location of a modern apartment complex built to the rear of several historic properties. On School Street, the original southern border, the survival rate of contributing historic properties is considerably less than in the rest of the district. Therefore, the boundaries, as drawn, exclude the middle section of the street which contains vacant parcels where historic houses were demolished, and severely altered non-contributing resources.

Expansion of the district beyond its original topographical boundaries cannot be justified on either architectural or historic grounds. For example, Washington Street that runs along the base of Jail Hill on the west was not included, because, in contrast to the small lots and vernacular housing of the district, most of the properties there are considerably larger and a number contain high-style, nineteenth-century domestic architecture. Buckingham Street to the northwest was excluded because it developed later and contains a high proportion of modern non-contributing buildings. The distinct neighborhood on the north side of Jail Hill, which includes upper Cedar, Green, and Slater streets, was laid out in the early twentieth century; therefore the architecture there has a different character as well as a greater degree of style. As discussed in Item #7, streets to the south and east lie well below the district. In addition to this physical separation, in general, nineteenth-century buildings there are historically associated with the development of downtown Norwich.

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List of Photographs

Photographer: Jan Cunningham

Date: July 1998

Negatives on file: Connecticut Historical Commission

1. NORWICH FEMALE ACADEMY, facing NE
2. REV. SETH B. PADDOCK HOUSE, facing N
3. HORACE W. JACKSON HOUSE, facing NE
4. THOMAS B. WILLIAMS HOUSE, facing SE
5. MARGARET MEHAN & PATRICK McKIERNAN HOUSES (l-r), facing NE
6. ROGER P. LeRAY & GEORGE BARSTOW HOUSES (l-r), facing NW
7. PATRICK KAIN & JAMES TROLAN HOUSES (l-r), facing NE
8. JOHN HALLIDAY & JAMES L. SMITH HOUSES (l-r), facing W
9. Streetscape: 30, 34, 38, 40 Cedar Street (l-r), facing NW  
(CHARLES H. HARRIS, WILLIAM H. HARRIS, ELISHA WILLIAMS, MICHAEL BIRRACREE HOUSES)
10. HEBARD-GEDULIG HOUSE, facing NE
11. JOSEPH CONNOR HOUSE #1 & MICHAEL BIRRACREE COTTAGE (r-l), facing SW
12. CHARLES OSGOOD COTTAGE, facing NE
13. JOHN KINGLSEY HOUSES #1 & #2, (l-r), facing NE
14. JOHN KINGSLEY HOUSES #4 & #3 (l-r), facing SE
15. HANS RASMUSSEN HOUSE, facing SE
16. PATRICK CURRAN HOUSE, facing N
17. CATHERINE MAHONEY & JEREMIAH MORAN HOUSES (l-r), facing S
18. PATRICK HALLAHAN & WILHELM HAMANN HOUSES (l-r), facing NW
19. CORNELIUS McNAMARA HOUSE, facing SW
20. JOHN MEHAN HOUSE, facing E



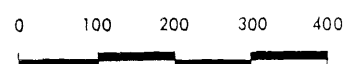
**JAIL HILL HISTORIC DISTRICT**

Norwich, New London County, CT

- # Contributing resource
- Ⓝ Non-contributing resource
- # with arrow: photograph view

**Bold Line : National Register District Boundary**

Cunningham Preservation Associates, LLC 8/98





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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 99000431 Date Listed: 04/19/99

Jail Hill Historic District New London CT  
Property Name County State

N/A  
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

*for*   
Signature of the Keeper

4-19-99  
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

8. Statement of Significance: Area(s)

"Black" is added as the appropriate affiliation with "Ethnic Heritage" as an applicable area of significance under criterion A.

This information was confirmed with John Herzan, National Register Coordinator, CTSHPO staff by telephone.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without attachment)