NPS Form 10-900
(3-82)

OMB No. 1024-0018
Exp. 10-31-84

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received JAN 8 1987
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Rose Island Lighthouse

and/or common Rose Island Lighthouse

2. Location

street & number southwest point of Rose Island ___ not for publication

city, town Newport N.A. vicinity of

state Rhode Island code 44 county Newport code 005

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
___ district	X public	___ occupied	___ agriculture	___ museum
X building(s)	___ private	X unoccupied	___ commercial	___ park
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational	___ private residence
___ site	**Public Acquisition**	**Accessible**	___ entertainment	___ religious
___ object	N.A. in process	X yes: restricted	___ government	___ scientific
	___ being considered	___ yes: unrestricted	___ industrial	___ transportation
		___ no	___ military	X other: vacant

4. Owner of Property

name City of Newport

street & number City Hall, Broadway

city, town Newport ___ vicinity of state Rhode Island 02840

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number Broadway

city, town Newport state Rhode Island 02840

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date C. 1974 ___ federal X state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
___ excellent	___ deteriorated	___ unaltered	_X_ original site
___ good	___ ruins	_X_ altered	___ moved date _____
_X_ fair	___ unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

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

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

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

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

(See Continuation Sheet #1)

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

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

Structure: 1

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below				
___ prehistoric	___ archeology-prehistoric	___ community planning	___ landscape architecture	___ religion	
___ 1400–1499	___ archeology-historic	___ conservation	___ law	___ science	
___ 1500–1599	___ agriculture	___ economics	___ literature	___ sculpture	
___ 1600–1699	___ architecture	___ education	___ military	___ social/ humanitarian	
___ 1700–1799	___ art	___ engineering	___ music	___ theater	
_X_ 1800–1899	___ commerce	___ exploration/settlement	___ philosophy	_X_ transportation	
_X_ 1900–	___ communications	___ industry	___ politics/government	___ other (specify)	
		___ invention			

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

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Walter Nebiker Post Card Collection, Warren, R.I., Rhode Island Lighthouses Album.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1.5 acres

Quadrangle name Newport

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	19	304410	4596200
B			
C			
D			
E			
F			
G			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

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

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

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title David Chase, Consultant

organization

date

street & number 5613 Boxhill Lane

telephone 301-435-8221

city or town Baltimore

state Maryland 21210

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

X national ___ state ___ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

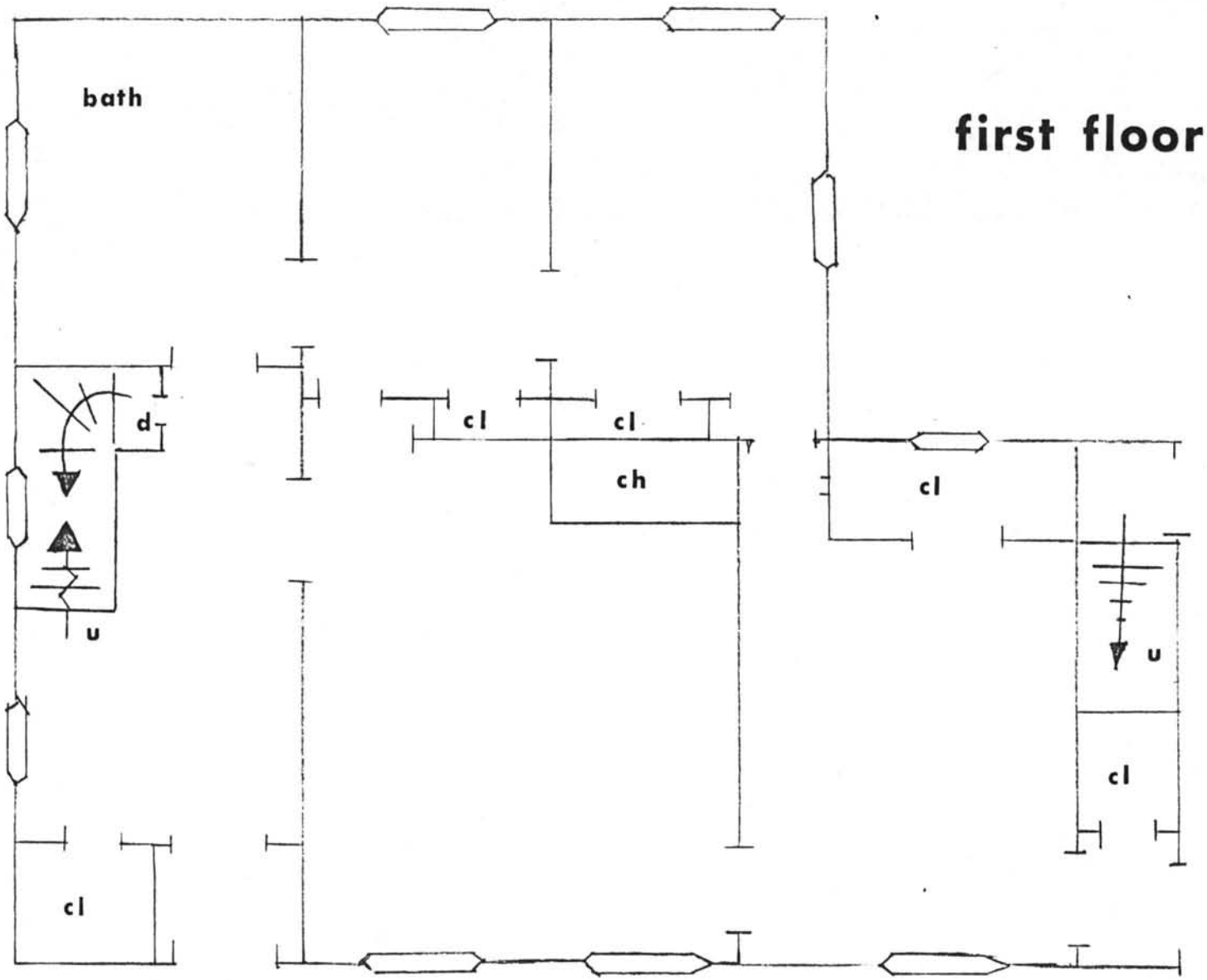
ROSE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE
National Register Nomination

Rose Island Lighthouse
Newport, Rhode Island

UTM coordinates

A: 19 304410 4596200

Rose Island Lighthouse



first floor

not to scale

N

ROSE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE
Newport, R.I.

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

First floor plan.

Figure #5

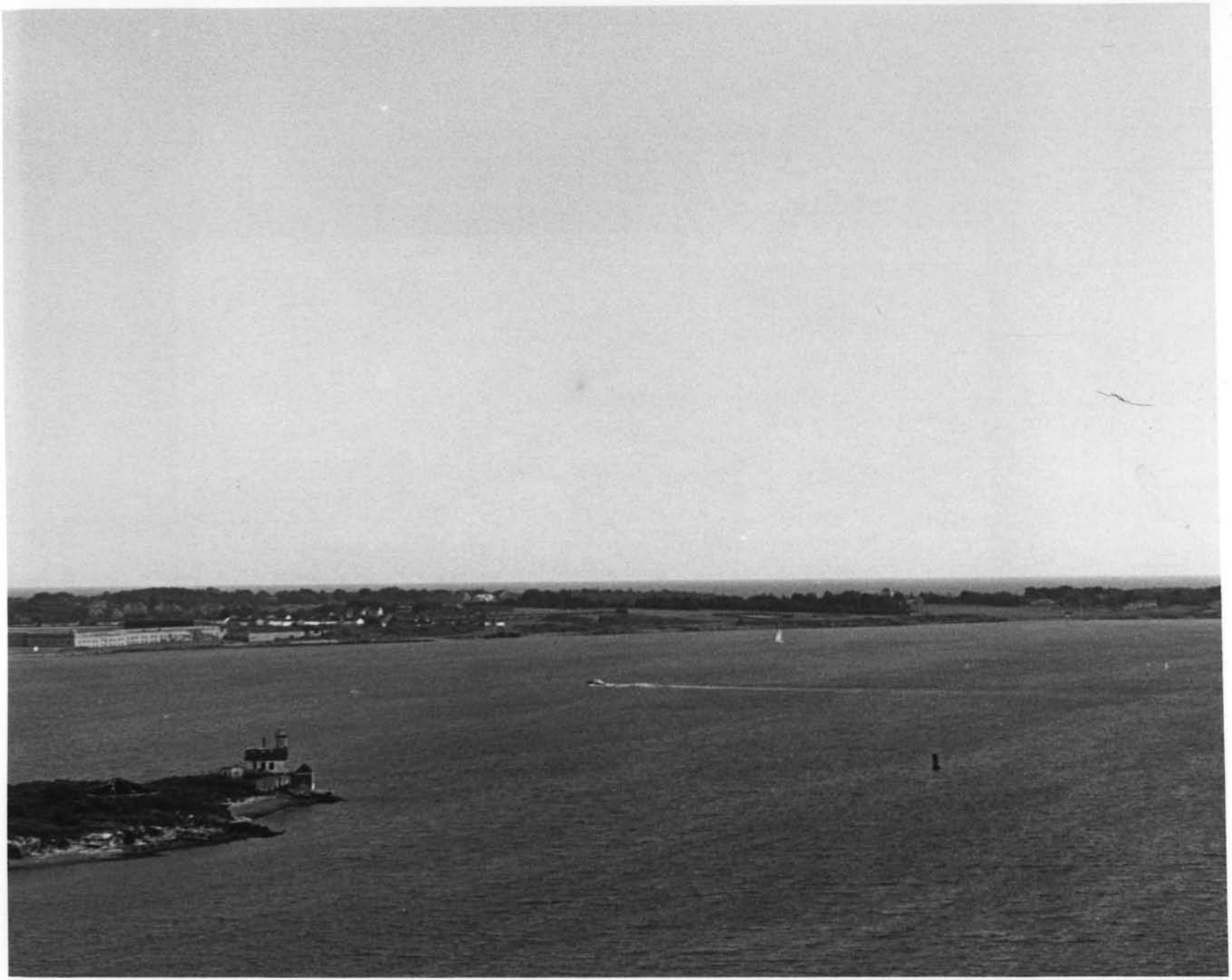


ROSE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE
Newport, R.I.

Photographer: Robert Foley
September, 1984
Neg. filed at: Planning Dept., Newport City Hall

View from the northwest, from Newport Bridge.

Figure #1

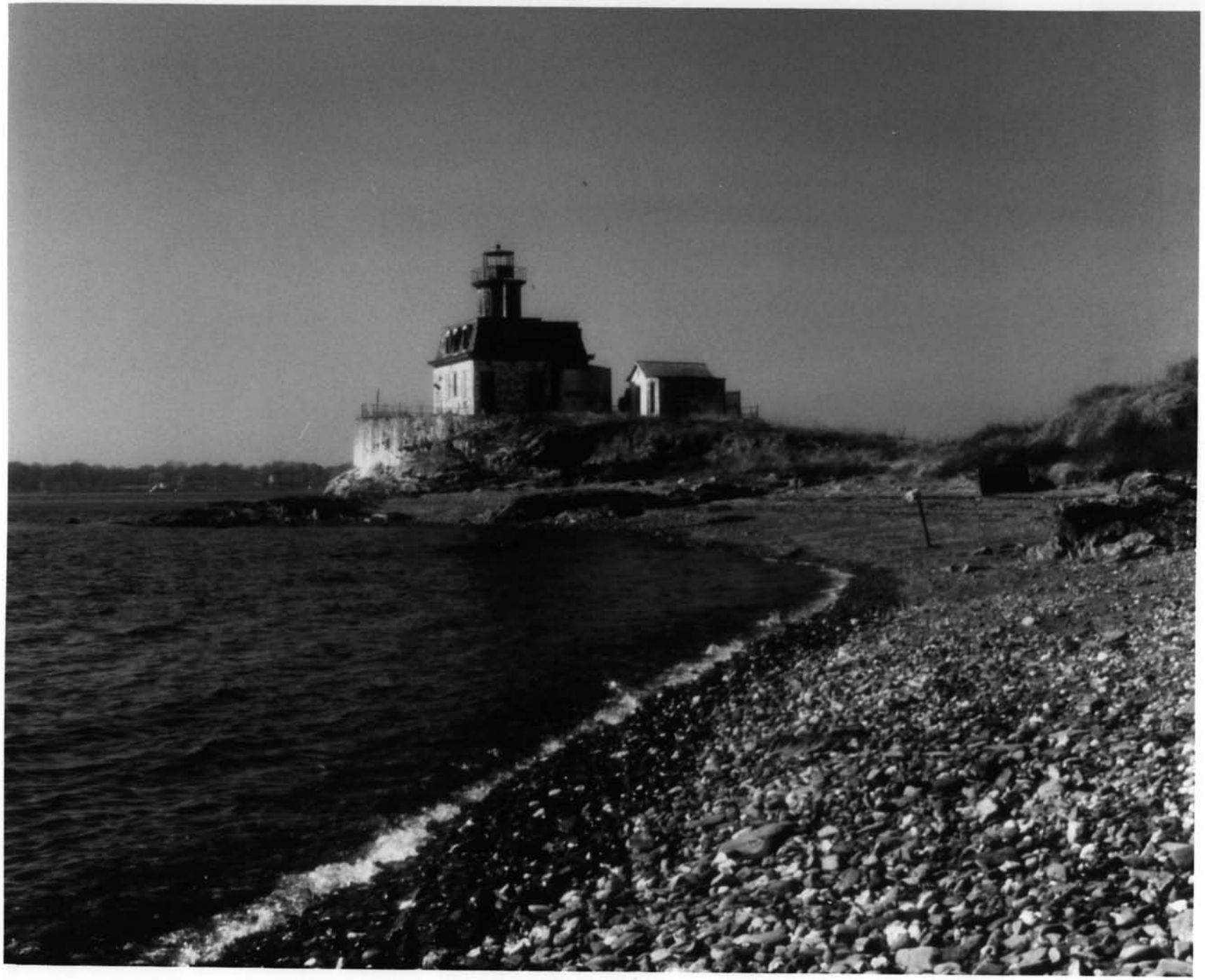


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View from the northwest, from Newport Bridge.

Figure #2

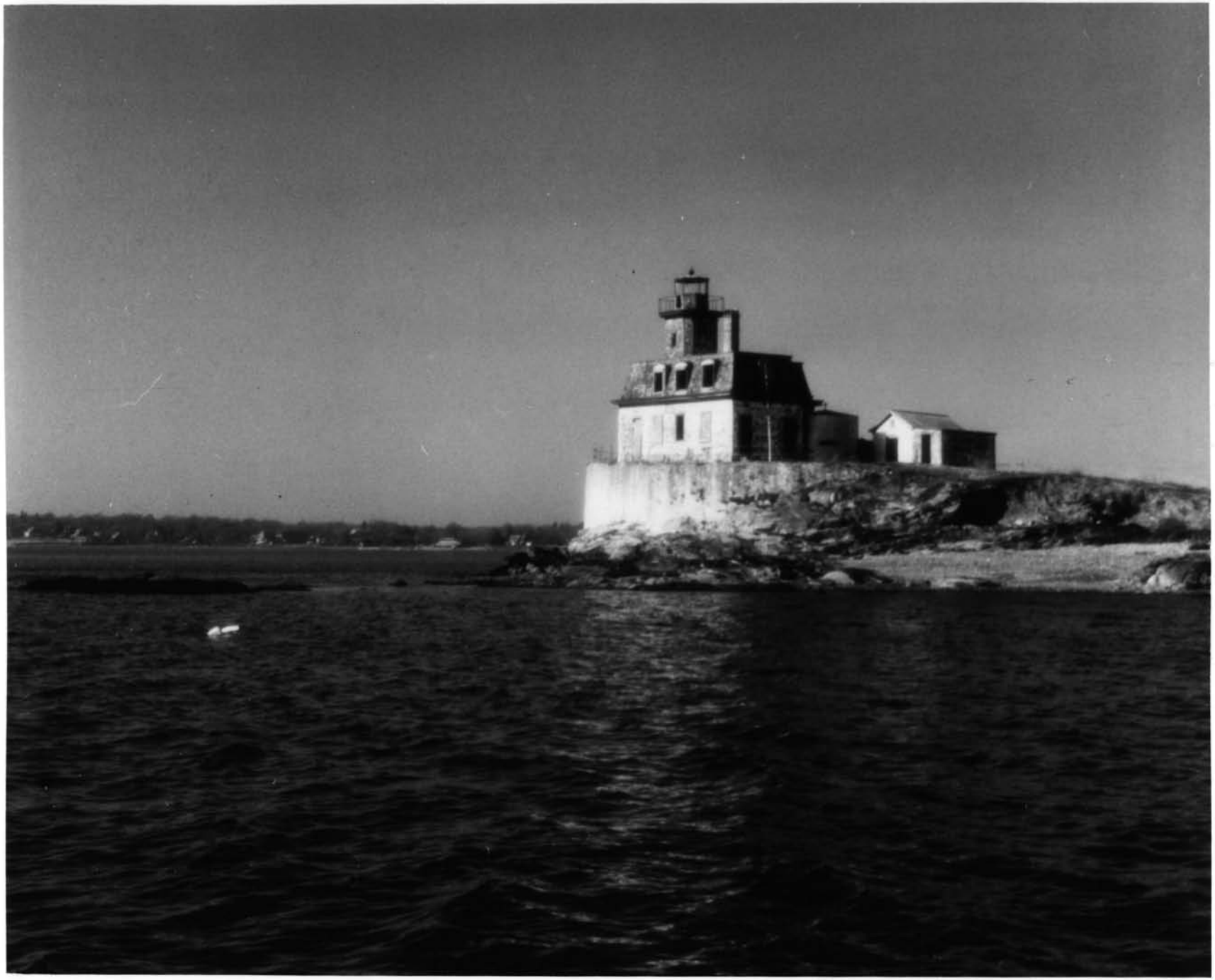


ROSE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE
Newport, R.I.

Photographer: Curtis Bunting
July, 1984
Neg. filed at: Planning Dept., City Hall, Newport

General view from the southeast.

Figure #3



ROSE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE
Newport, R.I.

Photographer: Curtis Bunting
July, 1984
Neg. filed at: Planning Dept., Newport City Hall

General view from the southeast, close in.

Figure #4



ROSE ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE
Newport, R.I.

Photographer: Curtis Bunting
July, 1984
Neg. filed at: Planning Dept., City Hall, Newport

View of staircase.

Figure #6