

BROWN UNIVERSITY  
Prospect Street  
PROVIDENCE, RHODE ISLAND

HABS NO. RI- 181

HABS  
RI,  
4-PROV,  
81-

PHOTOGRAPHS

District of Rhode Island

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Philip D. Creer, District Officer  
14 College Street, Providence, R.I.

## MANNING HALL

HABS  
RI,  
4-PROV,  
81B-

Address: East side of Prospect Street between George and Waterman Streets, Brown University Campus, Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island.

An addendum to  
Manning Hall, Brown University,  
Prospect Street  
Providence, Rhode Island  
in HABS Catalog (1941).

Present Owner  
and Occupant: Brown University

Present Use: Lecture room on first floor, chapel on second floor.

Brief Statement  
of Significance: This building, designed by James C. Bucklin, architect, and built in 1834, is an example of Greek Revival in Providence.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History

1. Original and subsequent owners: Brown University.
2. Date of erection: Built in 1834 as a gift from Nicholas Brown, dedicated 1835.
3. Architect: James C. Bucklin (1801-1880).
4. Notes on alterations and additions: A framed notice displayed in the building reads, ". . . Upper floor used as a chapel til 1894. Interior renovated in 1946 and restored in 1959. Thomas Mott Shaw of Perry, Shaw, Hepburn and Dean, Boston, architect.
5. Sources of information: John Hutchins Cady, The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island: The Book Shop, 1957), pp. 107, 108.  
John Hutchins Cady, "Manning Hall, Centinarian," Brown Alumni Monthly, April, 1934.  
Walter J. Bronson, The History of Brown University (Providence, 1914), pp. 222, 234.  
Antoinette Forrester Downing, Early Homes of Rhode Island (Richmond, Virginia: Garrett and Massie, 1937), pp. 441, 445, 447.

Henry Russell Hitchcock, Jr., Rhode Island Architecture (Providence: Rhode Island Museum Press, 1939), p. 47.

- B. Supplemental Material: The following is from John Hutchins Cady, The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence, 1636-1950 (Providence, 1957), p. 107:

"The temple form of facade, including a pronaos or portico, was used in the design of Manning Hall, the Greene Street School, and the Providence Athenaeum, the first two prostyle in form, having full length colonnades, and the third in antis, its columns enclosed between the projecting side walls. Manning Hall . . . , erected on the Brown Campus in 1834 and named for the first president of the college, was designed by Bucklin who took as his model the temple of Diana-Propylea in Eleusis. The building, designed for a library and a chapel, is stucco-coated and has four fluted Doric columns rising from a stylobate or platform on the principal facade, crowned by an entablature and pediment ornamented by academic details. In contrast with the Arcade, where the temple design is confined to the two street facades, Manning Hall has four exposed walls and a continuous entablature."

Henry Russell Hitchcock, Rhode Island Architecture (Providence, 1939), p. 47 evaluates Manning Hall as follows:

"Beside the Arcade the other temple-porticoed edifices of the second quarter of the nineteenth century are rather dull. Bucklin's Doric Manning Hall of 1833 at Brown is heavy and coarse. . . ."

William H. Jordy has listed the following descriptive characteristics of Manning Hall in mimeographed course notes for Art 109 at Brown University:

1. Compact, rectangular mass; low gable; uncomplicated outline, largely composed of long, straight lines. Within the block, massive cylindrical columns set against the rectangularity, exaggerating contrast in porch between solid and void.
2. Building on podium; but low, broad steps provide easy entrance.
3. Attempt at ideal, textureless forms via tan stucco covering of brick (columns) and rubble (walls); now badly weathered. Door painted in mottled green abstractly suggest weathered bronze.
4. Light and shade in large, flat areas; crisp, steady edges reflect broad simplicity of masses.
5. Openings symmetrically disposed, massive in scale (compare doors and windows to those of adjacent 18th century buildings). Windows crisply punched into wall without enframing; hence minimizing shadow, while emphasizing decisive contrast between solid and void.

6. Ornament massive, simple shapes with forceful linear boundaries; largely localized to cornice (and door).
7. Sense of dignified strength and formal ceremony; austere monumental in its command of its surroundings and its dwarfing of the human being.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement: This example of the Greek Revival in Providence is a rectangular, tetraprostyle, Doric temple form.
- B. Technical Description of Exterior
  1. Overall dimensions: Rectangular, tetraprostyle, temple form, about 45' x 90', with one-story portico on west front, but showing two tiers of windows on sides and rear.
  2. Foundations: Regular ashlar.
  3. Wall construction: Stone walls and brick columns, stuccoed, west front scored to resemble ashlar masonry. East rear divided by four flat pilasters. Greek Doric portico with four fluted columns on west front, Doric entablature around entire building and pediment on both ends.
  4. Openings:
    - a. Doorways and doors: Main entrance in portico, about 18' high x 8' wide, wood, 24 panels, lower half only opens in two leaves. Two leaf, top lighted, wood rear door on east. Small cellar door on south.
    - b. Windows: 15 over 15 light double hung windows on sides and rear.
  5. Roof:
    - a. Shape: Gable.
    - b. Cornice: Full Greek Doric entablature and cornice around entire building.
- C. Technical Description of Interior
  1. Floor plans: Entrance stair hall across west end with stair at south end of hall. Lecture room on first floor. Chapel on second floor with gallery above stair hall. Smaller entrance halls at east end of first floor.

2. Stairways: U-shape, open well, closed string, molded wood rail, square metal balusters and newels, stone steps, probably later.
3. Flooring: Modern wood floor in chapel. Modern tile floors elsewhere.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster walls and ceilings. Ceiling in chapel, a low segmental vault, divided into 30 shallow coffers.
5. Trim: Second floor chapel: Simple Greek ceiling cornice and entablature 3' high, made of plaster, with painted Greek key frieze; gallery supported on flat, paneled, Doric pilasters with high full entablature of wood, similar to ceiling, which serves as gallery railing; high, molded baseboards.
6. Hardware: Apparently none original.
7. Lighting: Electric
8. Heating: Modern central heating.

#### D. Site

General setting: Manning Hall is in a row of college buildings at one side of the Brown campus, eighteenth century buildings close by on both sides, facing away from the center of the campus toward Prospect Street, set well back from the street, open lawn with large trees, slopes down to Prospect Street.

Prepared by Osmond R. Overby, Architect  
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