

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

|                         |  |
|-------------------------|--|
| <b>FOR NPS USE ONLY</b> |  |
| RECEIVED                |  |
| DATE ENTERED            |  |

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC The Pawtucket Post Office

AND/OR COMMON Municipal Welfare Building

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 56 High Street  
(Corner of High and Summer Streets)

CITY, TOWN Pawtucket

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
(1 St. Germain)

STATE Rhode Island

CODE 44

COUNTY Providence CODE 007

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

| CATEGORY                                      | OWNERSHIP                                  | STATUS  | PRESENT USE  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED        | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)          | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE           | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED                 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK                  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH              | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS           | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE                 | <b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>                  | <b>ACCESSIBLE</b>                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT               | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED  | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION        |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> NO                         | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:                  |

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME City of Pawtucket

STREET & NUMBER 137 Roosevelt Avenue

CITY, TOWN Pawtucket

VICINITY OF

STATE Rhode Island

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Pawtucket City Hall

STREET & NUMBER 137 Roosevelt Avenue

CITY, TOWN Pawtucket

STATE Rhode Island

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Rhode Island Statewide Inventory

DATE 1974

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

CITY, TOWN Providence

STATE Rhode Island

## 7 DESCRIPTION

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

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

With the construction of a new post office in the 1890's, much of the civic identity of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, was centered in the area of Summer and High Streets. The Post Office (now the Municipal Welfare Building) was erected following plans of William M. Aiken and James Knox Taylor, consecutive Supervising Architects of the U. S. Treasury. Although the city conveyed a deed for the land at the corner of Summer and High Streets to the United States government as early as 1892, the construction of Pawtucket's new Post Office was not begun until 1896 when the arrival of "contractor Leach of Chicago" was heralded with great joy in the newspapers. The original designs for the building were drawn up under the direction of William M. Aiken, Supervising Architect of the Treasury from 1895 to 1897. Since Aiken was replaced by James Knox Taylor while the building was under construction, various plans were signed by Taylor. Completed around November 1, 1897, the new government office was quickly proclaimed the handsomest structure in Pawtucket.

A wedge-shaped building with central domed tower, the Pawtucket Post Office reflects the enthusiasm for Renaissance classicism and monumental urban planning popularized by the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition (1893). The building is constructed of red brick on a granite pedestal. Superimposed major and minor Doric order columns, arches, entablature and balustrades are of cast concrete. A slate mansard roof with copper trim crowns the composition; its wrought iron cresting has been removed. In general, the building is a stylistic combination of the Roman High Renaissance and France's Second Empire.

In typically Beaux Arts fashion, the building was sited to command the view up High Street from the main commercial district. On axis with this vista is the tower at the corner of High and Summer Streets. This tower signals the entrance to the building and provides a central focus for the structure. The tower served as a circular entrance lobby for the Post Office. Granite Doric columns supporting an entablature and two stone American Eagles frame the doorway. Between the cornice of the minor order and the more elaborate triglyph and metope cornice of the major order of the tower, the designers located three vertically oriented elliptical windows cased by rectangular architraves, broken at the corners and containing scroll and foliate decoration. Above the major cornice, the ribbed copper dome is supported on a copper-covered drum articulated with piers separated by Roman thermal windows. At the base of the dome is a band of alternating palmette and anthemion forms. The ribbed copper dome is capped by a small louvered cupola surmounted

See continuation Sheet 1

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by a ball finial.

The flanking sides of the post office are composed of runs of five arched window bays ending in slightly projecting pavillions. The window bays are defined by major columns with a minor order pilaster and arch within. A brick and cast concrete balustrade above repeats the rhythm of the arched units. The ends are emphasized by projecting pavillions containing a window with aedicular surround.

As originally constructed, the facade along Summer Street consisting of four window bays, while that on High Street was composed of three arched units. In the early twentieth century, the building was extended thirty feet to the northwest (along Summer Street) and twenty-five feet to the northeast (along High Street), equalizing the two main facades in five arched bays each.

In 1941, the building was acquired by the city of Pawtucket and has since been used as the Municipal Welfare Building. Later additions and changes in use have greatly altered the interior configuration. The circular entrance lobby in the tower and high raised-panel wainscoting in some areas suggest the original fine interior finish, praised in contemporary accounts of the construction. On the exterior the building retains its original character and still serves well as a Pawtucket landmark and an essential link to its civic history.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

## PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

|   |  |   |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC          | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC  | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING     | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499            | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC     | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION           | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW                    | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE                        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS              | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION              | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> ART                     | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING            | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC                  | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER                        |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE                | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY             | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-     | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS          | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY               | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT    | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)                |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION              |   |   |

SPECIFIC DATES 1896-97

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Aiken and J. K. Taylor

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of the Pawtucket Post Office underlies the civic, historical, and architectural development of the City of Pawtucket. As a civic locus, this structure was seen as an affirmation of prosperity and progress at the time of its construction. The new Post Office was looked upon as a symbol of the community's growing size and importance at the close of the nineteenth century. The structure was declared "a model of neatness and convenience" that will compare favorably with any Post Office in any city the size of Pawtucket in the country." The building, the only physical symbol of the Federal Government, was national recognition for a community that had grown quickly and was gradually evolving a self image.

The post office was erected at a significant point in the history of the city. Pawtucket's importance as the birthplace of American industry dates to 1790 when Samuel Slater arrived in Rhode Island. During the next three years, Slater, under the patronage of Moses Brown of Providence, reconstructed the Arkwright spinning frame and opened the first successful cotton mill in the United States. The mill, (now a museum and already on the National Register) was constructed on the west bank of the Blackstone River, not far from the future site of the post office. Over the following century, Pawtucket saw rapid economic expansion in the textile industry. By the end of the nineteenth century, Pawtucket residents were proud of their position as an industrial center of national importance and eager to erect structures physically expressive of their prosperity. In 1890, the Cotton Centennial was celebrated with extensive festivities and expectations for future progress. The post office, begun in the 1890's, represents the governmental and private recognition of Pawtucket's civic identity and self esteem.

In addition to the post office, the intersection of Summer and High Streets was marked as a community center by the presence of the First Baptist Church (1822) and the construction of a new Masonic

See continuation sheet 2

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Temple (1895), (both since demolished). Subsequently, the construction of a building for the Salvation Army and another for the Y.M.C.A. have continued the tradition of community service facilities in this area. Nearly contemporary was the erection of the Deborah Cook Sayles Public Library (Cram, Goodue and Furgusson, 1899-1902), located immediately west on Summer Street (and also entered on the National Register).

Finally, the Post Office is an excellent example of the architectural environment of the 1890's that continued into the early decades of the twentieth century. It closely follows the stylistic dictates of the Chicago World's Columbian Exposition (1893) that had so pervasive an influence upon American architecture. Emphasizing the principles of design learned by American architects at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, the buildings of the Columbian Exposition introduced Americans to the world of symmetry, axial planning and classical forms. The Pawtucket building shows the classicism of Renaissance Italy in its arched bay units and of 17th century France in its Mansard roof. The tower's placement on axis with the vista of the street betrays the Beaux-Arts love of monumentality and environmental planning.

Visually, the Pawtucket Post Office is a key landmark, prominently sited in the center of the city. Historically, the building represents the presence of federal and state government in Pawtucket. Its location corresponds to an earlier development pattern now drastically altered by recent urban renewal. In sum, the building testifies to the character and importance of Pawtucket at the end of the nineteenth century, a period of prosperity and civic awareness.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Grieve, Robert. An illustrated History of Pawtucket, Central Falls and Vicinity. Pawtucket: Pawtucket Gazette, 1897.

Pawtucket Evening Times, September 14, 1896 and November 1, 1897.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approximately 2

UTM REFERENCES

A | 1 | 9 | | 3 | 0 | 2 | | 1 | 3 | 0 | | 4 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 8 | 1 | 0 |

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

D | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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 Keith N. Morgan, Museum Specialist

ORGANIZATION Rhode Island Historical Preservation Comm. DATE March 4, 1975

STREET & NUMBER 150 Benefit Street TELEPHONE 277-2678

CITY OR TOWN Providence STATE Rhode Island

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

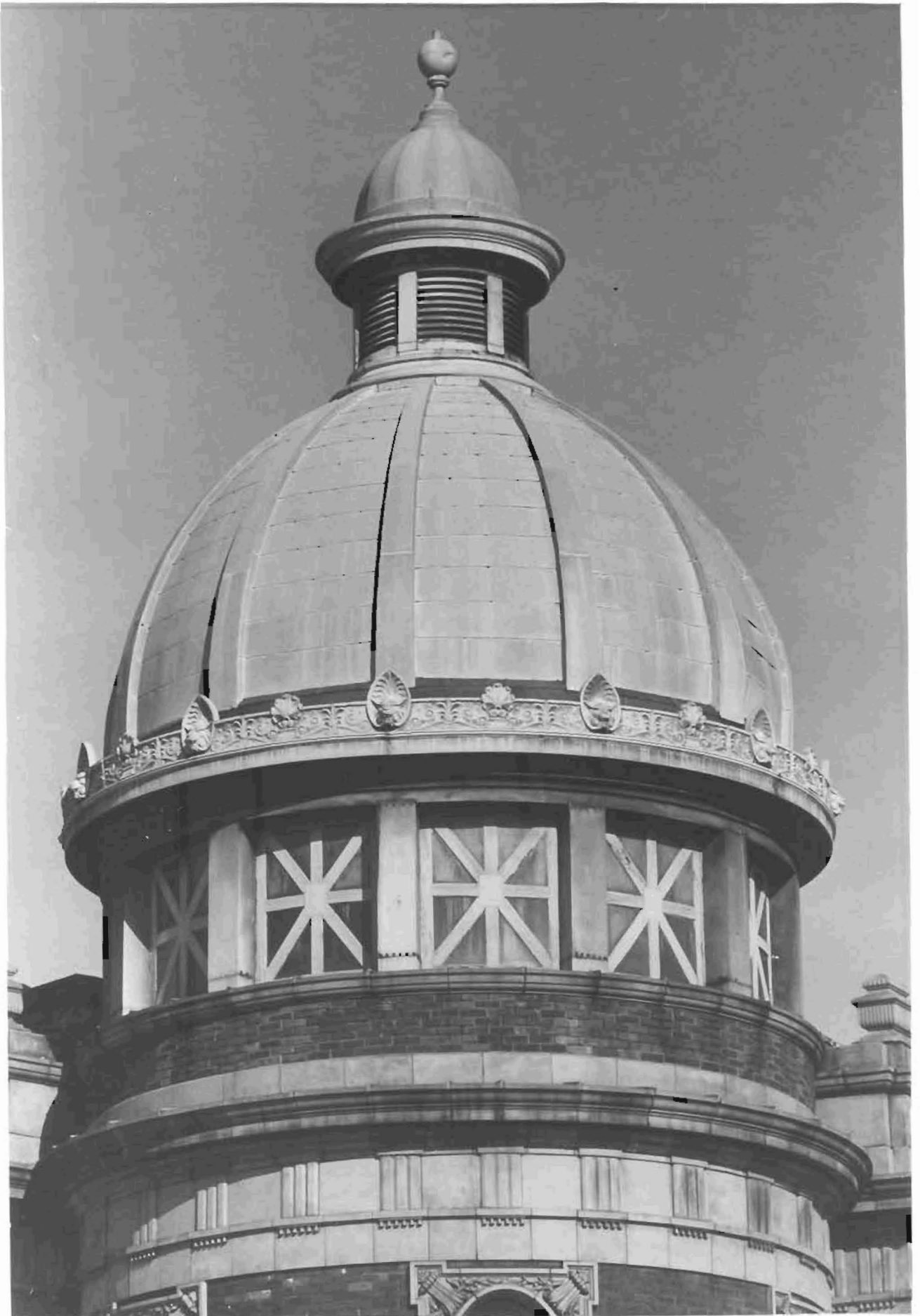
DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST:

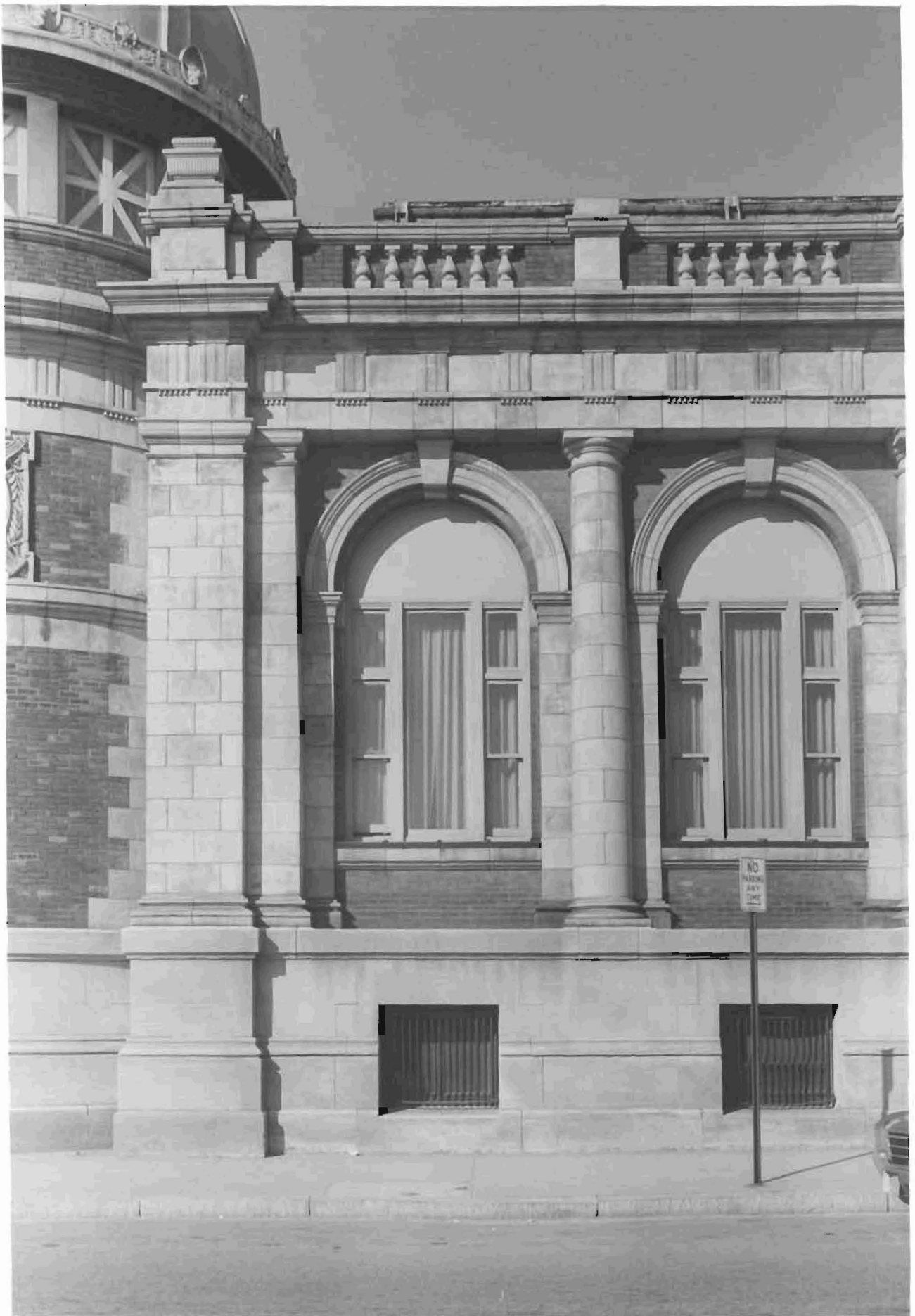
DATE

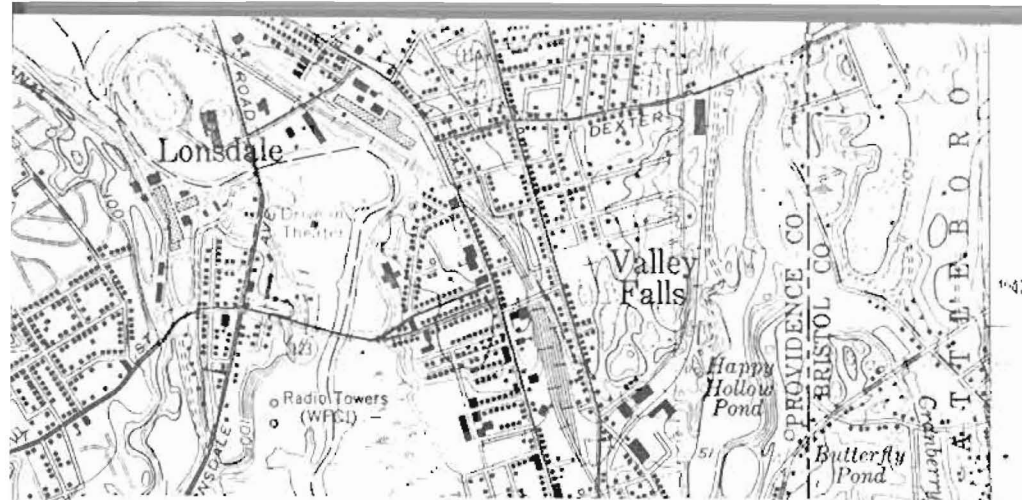
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER





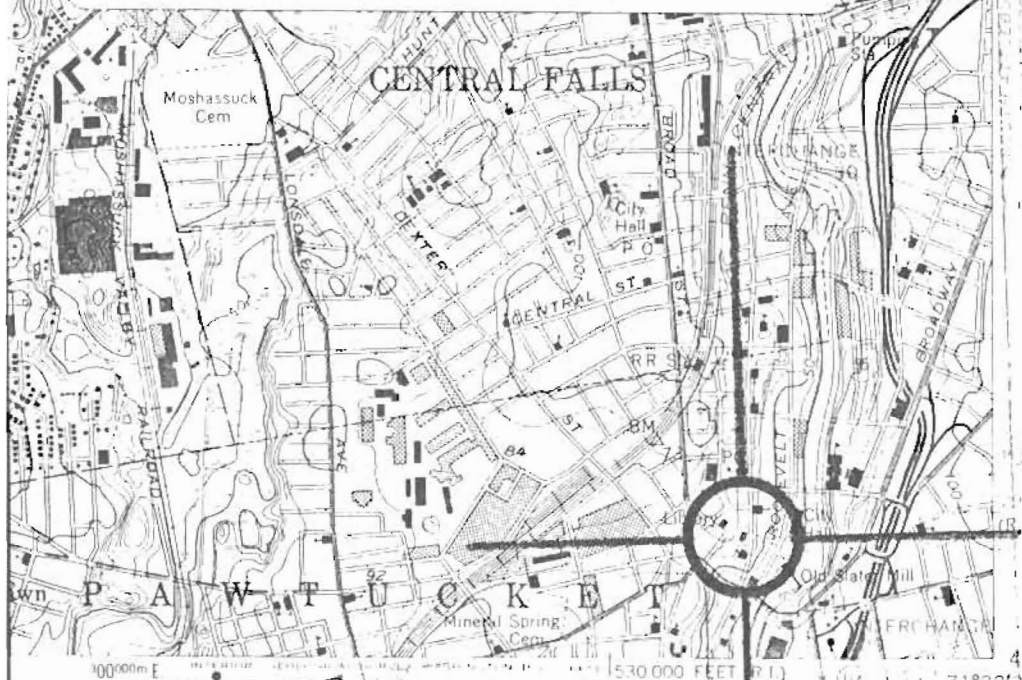






PAWTUCKET POST OFFICE

| ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |
|------|---------|----------|
| 19   | 302130  | 4638810  |



10000 FEET (R.I.)  
41°52'30"  
71°22'30"

ROAD CLASSIFICATION



(EAST PROVIDENCE)  
6.102 IV SE

PAWTUCKET, R. I.-MASS.

N4152.5—W7122.5/7.5

1949

PHOTOREVISED 1970

AMS 6767 IV NW—SERIES V815

QUADRANGLE LOCATION  
shown in purple compiled from aerial  
photos taken 1970. This information not  
checked  
indicates extension of urban areas