

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Rhode Island	
COUNTY: Providence	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Trinity Square Repertory Theatre

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Majestic Theatre

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
201 Washington Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Providence

STATE: Rhode Island CODE: 114 COUNTY: Providence CODE: 007

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public <input type="checkbox"/>	Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes: in future <input type="checkbox"/>
Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/>	Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/>	Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Object <input type="checkbox"/>	Both <input type="checkbox"/>	Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/>	Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/>
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/>	Government <input type="checkbox"/>	Park <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Comments <input type="checkbox"/>
Commercial <input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial <input type="checkbox"/>	Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/>
Educational <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>	Religious <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Entertainment <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Museum <input type="checkbox"/>	Scientific <input type="checkbox"/>	_____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME:
Trinity Square Repertory Theatre

STREET AND NUMBER:
37 Weybosset Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence STATE: Rhode Island, 02903 CODE: 114

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:
City Hall

STREET AND NUMBER:
Dorrance Street at Washington Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence STATE: Rhode Island, 02903 CODE: 114

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than one acre

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Not so represented

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/>	Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/>	Ruins <input type="checkbox"/>	Unexposed <input type="checkbox"/>
INTEGRITY	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	Altered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unaltered <input type="checkbox"/>	Moved <input type="checkbox"/>	Original Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE						
<p>This building, the former Majestic Theatre, was designed for the Emery Amusement Company by William R. Walker & Sons, a prolific and long-standing Providence firm, and completed in 1916 at a cost of \$500,000 or more. A large free-standing structure (120 by 180 feet) built on a steel frame, it is trapezoidal in form (a fact disguised by canted front corners) and flat-roofed, with the stage-loft at the north rising higher than the rest of the building. Its bulk is given special prominence by the open traffic areas surrounding it.</p> <p>The main, or entrance, façade, facing south, is treated lavishly and carried for a short distance around the canted front corners; it gives an impression of four storeys plus an attic in the frieze. This portion of the building, prefacing the auditorium, is given an eclectic Renaissance treatment characteristic of the Beaux-Arts style popular in the first decades of this century and employed for public buildings in particular. White terra-cotta with accents in green and gold has been used to face the entire façade, and it is important to note that, in accord with standard terra-cotta practice, the architectural embellishment is built up of architectural details cast in units as stock patterns. This kind of modular system with its use of cast parts introduces an inherently repetitive aspect into the design and explains the somewhat sterile--in spite of its elaboration--character of the whole composition.</p> <p>Seven equal bays wide (counting the openings in the canted corners), the façade is dominated by a central arched recess that rises three storeys from sidewalk to entablature and is finished with a wide, ornamentally-moulded inner enframingent and surmounted by a cartouche. The lower level in the recess contains the main entrance; the upper part is filled by a large, prominently-mullioned, tripartite plate glass window divided horizontally by stucco bandings at the floor or landing levels. At street level, the original ornate metal and glass marquises have now been replaced by a metal canopy-cum-announcement board, and marquises above corner shop-entrances have gone. On either side of the central arch are windows on two storey-levels, and in the outermost bays are tall windows indicative of four storey-levels--all of these having a variety of ornamental enframements. Across the top of the façade runs an architrave band with a panelled frieze (containing the name of the theatre) above it. Above the frieze is an elaborate arched corbel table supporting a narrow, embossed band of cornice. A panelled and balustraded parapet surmounts the cornice. The theatre's front exhibits a great variety of cast ceramic detail (some of it coloured)--mouldings, round and diamond-shaped bosses, swags, cartouches, foliation, relief panels, pediments etc.</p> <p>Festive external decoration is, however, confined to the front of the building, and its sides and rear are of buff brick with the nearly</p>						
(See Continuation Sheet.)						

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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(Continuation Sheet) 1

STATE Rhode Island	
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(Number all entries)

7. Description.

Blank expanses above the ground storey divided into "bays" by narrow rusticated piers; on these elevations the few openings are there by necessity only and are unadorned, irregularly spaced. A plain one-storey extension at the north or rear of the theatre contains some retail shops.

Entering through the central doors at the south, which have stained-glass transoms, one is in a 30-by-50-foot lobby with a tessellated floor and marble baseboard, plastered walls, a compartmented ceiling and elaborate plaster cornice treatment. Wide semi-elliptical archways flanked by panelled Ionic pilasters open at left and right to stair-halls; doors along the rear open to the orchestra level of the auditorium. In the centre of the ceiling is a large oval opening--with elaborate internal cornice treatment--looking to the upper lobby and a domed skylight of stained glass.

The lateral stair-halls are panelled in three colours of Italian marble and have exit doors with stained-glass transoms; the stairs themselves are also of marble and have elaborate bronze and wrought-iron rails; decorative bronze grilles cover heating vents in the walls; and walls and ceiling are separated by a full classical entablature in plaster.

The chief remaining display of grandeur in the building to-day, however, is the upper lobby, or foyer to the loges and gallery. Of the same dimensions as the entrance lobby, it has a wide stretch of tall windows (no doubt originally heavily valanced and draped) on its south side, doors to the auditorium along its north side and wide openings from the stair-halls at either end. Plaster walls above a marble baseboard have pilasters of adaptive Tuscan form with stopped fluting and pendant ornamentation in the upper part of the fluting. The ceiling is compartmented, and a classical cornice with egg-and-dart motif and dentils is used around the room and within the compartments. The showpiece here is the central rotunda (actually oval) opening which looks into the entrance lobby below. Eight plaster columns (again with stopped fluting and pendant ornament) of the Composite order appear to support the stained-glass "dome" capping this opening (and artificially lit from above), and between them, in seven sections, runs a highly ornate marble-capped bronze grille or rail. Within the base of the "dome" there is an elaborate plaster entablature treatment with modillions, an embossed frieze punctuated by garlands etc. Gilding has been liberally used in all this adornment; and there are gilt scrolled brackets in the angles of the chief recesses and openings of this lobby, pendant lamps with gilt-bronze frames (incorporating masks, garlands, tassels) and milk-glass in the corner compartments of the ceiling.

Beyond the north-east and north-west corners of this lobby, plain enclosed stairways lead to the upper-gallery level, where a frontal cross-hall has an arched window grouping partially filled by stained glass.

(See Continuation Sheet 2.)

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(Continuation Sheet)-2

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7. Description.

The auditorium and spreading proscenium continued the theme of lavish décor. But since this area has now been stripped and is to be completely rebuilt (not restored), only a brief quoted description, from The Providence Magazine of April, 1917, will be given of its past grandeur:

The auditorium, having a seating capacity of 1,100 people, is wainscoted in Italian and Turkish marbles. The walls are hung with silk tapestries. The balcony seats 1,600. The stage is 80 feet deep and 35 feet wide. ... In addition to the usual stage boxes, there are loges in front of the balcony and on the main floor from the boxes to the back wall.

There was also a vast amount of other moulded, painted and gilt plaster panel and relief decoration.

8. Significance.

could revel in the halls and lobbies with their marbles, columns, balustrades and carpeting and in the gilt, colours and velvet in the auditorium.

For these reasons, this building occupies a particular place in American architectural history. But in itself, it is a good building, visually pleasing; and it is a late product of a prominent local firm of architect-partners whose adjustments in style, through some eight decades and three generations, is interesting. It should also be noted for its use of terra-cotta facing and trim--much promoted by its manufacturers and by architectural publications c. 1895-1920 in place of carved stone. That material was flexible and adaptable and quite economically could imitate the carving for which workers were becoming less available. This is one of the very few terra-cotta façades in downtown Providence.

With the coming of television, drive-in theatres and intimate cinemas, this building came to outlive its original use and profitability. Now, the Trinity Square Repertory Theatre, which has become internationally known and was in need of a permanent base and an adequate auditorium for its productions, has acquired the Majestic Theatre. The gilded auditorium is being stripped and gutted to provide two levels of modern performing areas. However, the exterior elevations, the paved lobby at street-level, the two fine stair-halls, the upper lobby and rotunda will be retained, cleaned and refurbished to show again as much of their original elegance as finances will allow.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Pre-Columbian 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1916

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal	Education	Political	Urban Planning
Prehistoric <input type="checkbox"/>	Engineering <input type="checkbox"/>	Religion/Phi-	Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/>
Historic <input type="checkbox"/>	Industry <input type="checkbox"/>	losophy <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Agriculture <input type="checkbox"/>	Invention <input type="checkbox"/>	Science <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Art <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Landscape <input type="checkbox"/>	Sculpture <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Commerce <input type="checkbox"/>	Architecture <input type="checkbox"/>	Social/Human-	_____
Communications <input type="checkbox"/>	Literature <input type="checkbox"/>	itarian <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Conservation <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>	Theater <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	_____
	Music <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/>	_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

This sizeable building with its large-scale exterior adornment occupies its downtown location well, being in height, weight and proportions in good visual balance and relationship with nearby municipal buildings and even with a neighbouring modern parking-garage. Its Washington Street façade provides a good "stop"--in the sense of punctuation--to the north-western end of Providence's downtown shopping and entertainment area.

Although it is about to embark on a new life--housing new, alive performers using innovative and lively forms of dramatic expression, the Majestic Theatre building will remain a prominent physical reminder of the era of the extravagant and luxurious "movie palaces" constructed in America during the second-through-fourth decades of this century. Expensive as their construction and décor may have been, they were paid for many times over by the pre-TV public, who found romance, world travel and nepenthe in the then-new entertainment medium. The theatres were part of the illusion, supplying imperially palatial and formal, extravagantly frivolous, or startlingly "moderne" settings for their motion-pictures, their vaudeville entertainers and the blasting sound of their great disappearing pipe-organs. The entrepreneurs and their architects well knew what would be the return on investment in these theatre structures and in constructing them often produced buildings and interiors now highly admired from other viewpoints.

Alone among Providence movie-houses (otherwise concealed in or under office and loft buildings, or in squeezed sites where only an entrance is visible), it seems, the Majestic Theatre of 1916 is a large and free-standing structure which externally proclaims its functions. The building, further, had a way of announcing to the potential ticket-buyer that its auditorium did not house the more serious arts. The south façade--elaborate and somewhat playful with its white, green and gold facing, its varied and ornamented openings--let one know immediately that this was a place of enjoyment, in the same rather frivolous manner as Mexico City's National Theatre of 1900 and London's Gaiety Theatre of 1905. Once enticed inside, the clerk, the shopgirl and the housewife

(See Continuation Sheet 2.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Providence Magazine, April, 1916, April, 1917.
 Cady, John Hutchins: The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence, 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island, 1957), pp. 227-228.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		40 ° 49 ' 19.40" N	71 ° 25 ' 01.10" W	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
 Richard B. Harrington, Consultant

ORGANIZATION: Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission DATE: April 22, 1972

STREET AND NUMBER:
 John Brown House, 52 Power Street

CITY OR TOWN: Providence STATE: Rhode Island, 02906 CODE: RI

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

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

 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

 Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Trinity Square Repertory Theatre
AND/OR HISTORIC: Majestic Theatre

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
201 Washington Street

CITY OR TOWN:
Providence

STATE:
Rhode Island

CODE
111

COUNTY:
Providence

CODE
007

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: William L. Smith

DATE OF PHOTO: January, 1972

NEGATIVE FILED AT: William L. Smith, P. O. Box 201,
Hyannis, Massachusetts, 02601

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

Street-level lobby, looking west and showing opening to
rotunda above.



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2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: 201 Washington Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Providence			
STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 44	COUNTY: Providence	CODE 007
3. PHOTO REFERENCE			
PHOTO CREDIT: William L. Smith			
DATE OF PHOTO: January, 1972			
NEGATIVE FILED AT: William L. Smith, P. O. Box 201, Hyannis, Massachusetts, 02601			
4. IDENTIFICATION			
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. Front portion of east stair-hall at street level.			



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Providence

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44

COUNTY:

Providence

CODE

007

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: William L. Smith

DATE OF PHOTO: January, 1972

NEGATIVE FILED AT: William L. Smith, P. O. Box 201,
Hyannis, Massachusetts, 02601

4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

Second-floor lobby, looking west.



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3. PHOTO REFERENCE

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DATE OF PHOTO: January, 1972

NEGATIVE FILED AT: William L. Smith, P. O. Box 201,
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4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

Exterior from the south-west.



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CITY OR TOWN: Providence			
STATE: Rhode Island	CODE 111	COUNTY: Providence	CODE 007
3. PHOTO REFERENCE			
PHOTO CREDIT: William L. Smith			
DATE OF PHOTO: January, 1972			
NEGATIVE FILED AT: William L. Smith, P. O. Box 201, Hvannis, Massachusetts, 02601			
4. IDENTIFICATION			
DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. Hanging lamp in second-floor lobby.			



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114

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CODE

007

3. PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT: William L. Smith

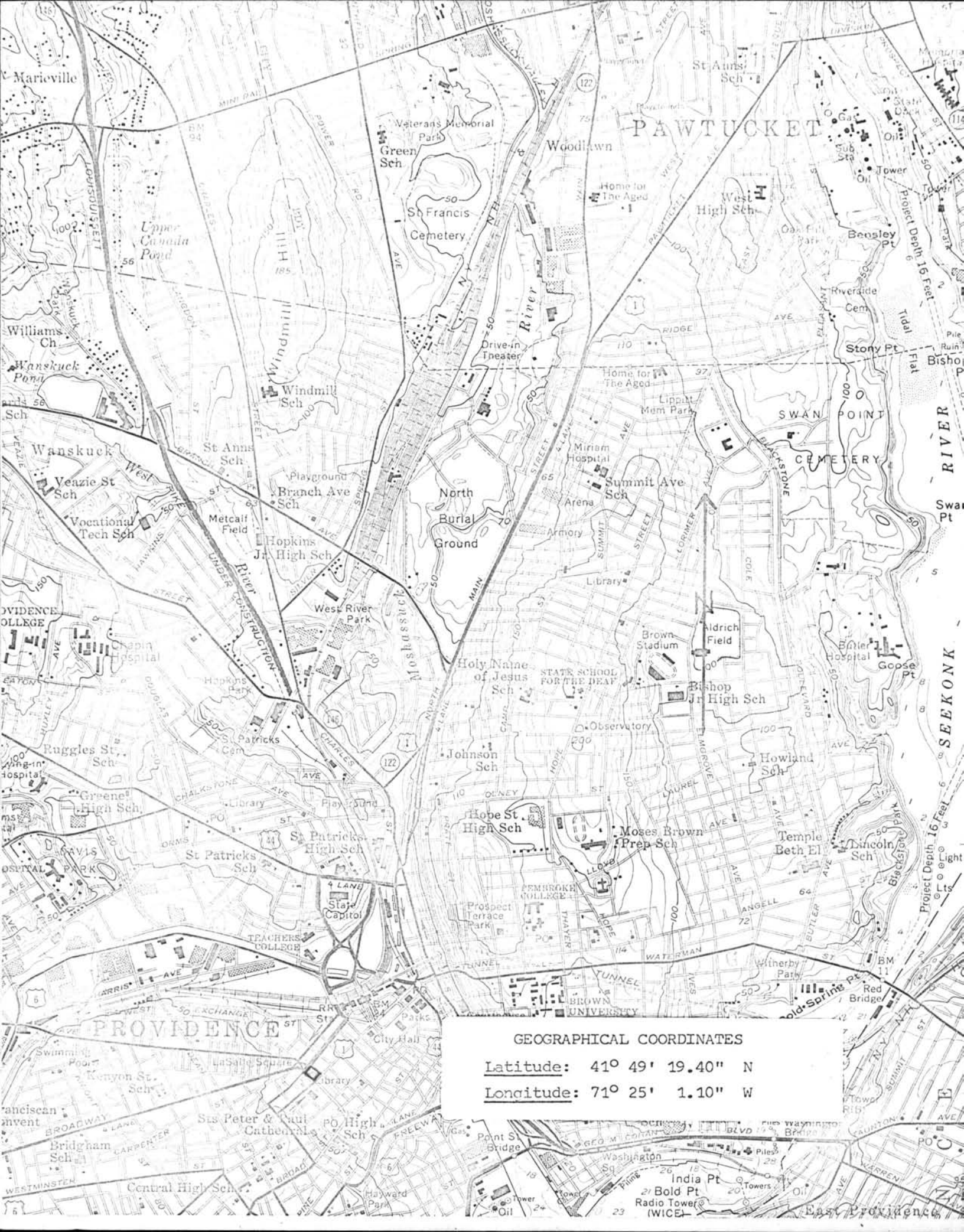
DATE OF PHOTO: January, 1972

NEGATIVE FILED AT: William L. Smith, P. O. Box 201,
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4. IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.

Detail of upper portion of south façade, showing ornamentation
in cast terra cotta, in colours.



GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES

Latitude: 41° 49' 19.40" N

Longitude: 71° 25' 1.10" W

East Providence

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM

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Providence

CODE

007

3. MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE:

U. S. Geological Survey

SCALE:

1: 24,000

DATE:

1957

4. REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. Property boundaries where required.
2. North arrow.
3. Latitude and longitude reference.