

PROVISIONS WAREHOUSE HISTORIC DISTRICT
Kinsley and Harris Avenues
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HAER No. RI-408

HABS
RI
4-PROV,
201-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
PROVISIONS WAREHOUSE HISTORIC DISTRICT**

HABS
RI
4-PROV,
201-
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Location: Kinsley and Harris Avenues, Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island

USGS Providence, Rhode Island Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:

19.298480.4633390

19.298560.4633390

19.298820.4633340

19.299090.4633240

19.299090.4633200

19.298700.4633120

19.298500.4633140

Present Owner(s): Multiple

Present Occupant(s): Multiple

Present Use: Commerce, Storage, Fabrication, Vacant

Significance: The Provisions Warehouse Historic District is significant for its associations with the history of the Providence food provisions industry and for its related technology and industrial machinery. The utilitarian designs of the buildings reflect national trends in industrial building construction during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The work of several noted local architects and engineers, including Stone, Carpenter, & Willson, architects, Oresto DiSaia, architect, Jenks & Ballou, engineers, and George Leach, engineers, is represented by buildings in the district.

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[Note: Text adapted from the Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. Provisions Warehouse Historic District National Register of Historic Places Evaluation (Prepared for Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. and the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, December 1994).]

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

The Provisions Warehouse Historic District is comprised of 11 masonry buildings on Kinsley and Harris Avenues and Terminal Way constructed between 1894 and 1947. Most of the buildings are associated with the local food storage, processing, and distribution industries. Located adjacent to the tracks of the New York, New Haven, & Hartford Railroad, the District was established with the construction of the Merchants' Cold Storage Co. Warehouse (MCSW) at 160 Kinsley Avenue. This warehouse offered refrigerated storage facilities for seasonal produce, including meats, eggs, fruits and vegetables. When it was built, the warehouse was considered a state-of-the-art facility in terms of its refrigeration technology. During the first half of the twentieth century, other cold storage and dry storage warehouses were added to the area immediately surrounding the MCSW. Among them were the Providence Fruit and Produce Building (1929), M. T. Marcello Freezing and Storage Warehouse Co. (1947) (HABS No. RI-410), Armour & Company (1943) (HABS No. RI-409), Brownell & Field Co. (1907), and several other provisions companies. All of the major warehouses were connected via a spur line to the railroad. To facilitate the movement of goods within the warehouse district, a series of underground tunnels was constructed between the MCSW and neighboring distributors who depended on the warehouse for their cold storage. In addition, other companies established their own cold storage units and foods processing and distributions systems.

Several factors influenced the physical development of the Provisions Warehouse Historic District. The first was the Industrial Revolution, which brought industries, and in turn a growing population, into Providence throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The second was the establishment of an extensive railroad network throughout the region in the mid- to late nineteenth century. The growth of the railroads led to the filling in of the Great Salt Cove basin (the Cove) to accommodate a rail terminal, yards, and various lines that demanded land near the downtown central business district and the burgeoning urban population. At the same time, a need developed for affordable and convenient locations for commercial ventures. In general, the retail center grew into what is now Downtown Providence, while industrial areas were tied to the rivers and canals. Farmers and other foods distributors and processors continued to sell their perishable produce on the East Side of Providence at Market Square, where they had been since 1773 when Market House was built.

In 1792, the Market Square area was expanded after the east side of the Cove was filled, providing for a new street, now Canal Street, near Market Square and the Market House. By the early nineteenth century, at the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, important manufacturing companies built along the valleys of the Moshassuck, and Woonasquatucket Rivers which converged at the Cove near Market Square. In 1828, the Blackstone Canal, which ran adjacent to Market Square area, was opened between Worcester, Massachusetts and Providence to encourage the transportation of raw materials, manufactured goods, and agricultural products. By 1830, however, the advent of the steam engine enabled manufacturers to locate farther from navigable rivers and ushered in the age of the railroad. By 1848, the railroads had supplanted the canal as the primary form of transportation in the city. Among the earliest in Providence was the Providence & Worcester line, opened in 1847.

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During the first phase of railroad development in 1847-48, the Provisions Warehouse Historic District area was still under water in the west side of the Great Salt Cove at the Woonasquatucket River. The center for provisions warehousing and distribution remained at Market Square. In 1846, the Providence City Council granted the railroad the right to reduce the Cove to a basin surrounded by a promenade, channel the Moshassuck River, and build tracks, yards, and a terminal on the filled area. The railroad fought for the right to build a terminal close to the business center, near present-day Exchange Street. In 1848, Union Station (no longer extant), a passenger depot, designed by local architect, Thomas Tefft, was erected on the site.

The second phase of railroad expansion created the land of the Provisions Warehouse Historic District. By late in the nineteenth century, the growing railroad companies (including the New York, Providence, & Boston, the Providence & Springfield, and the New York, New Haven & Hartford) requested that the Cove basin be filled in, and that the 1848 Union Station be replaced by a larger one. In 1889, the City Council accepted the railroads' requests, and, a larger station, designed by Stone, Carpenter, & Willson, architects, was built. Freight yards and tracks were constructed; the two rivers were channeled; and an elevated viaduct was erected. By 1892, the railroad plans had been accomplished (U.S. Department of Transportation, pp. 66-68), and retaining walls erected through the Cove basin to confine the rivers in their new courses was completed. It provided a width of 100 ft. for the Woonasquatucket and 50 ft. for the Moshassuck. The two rivers converged into the Providence River east of the railroad terminal. The remainder of the Cove basin was filled, and the Cove promenade was eradicated. Road improvements in this building program included the extension of Promenade Street east to Canal Street and three new roads, including Kinsley Avenue, one of the two main thoroughfares of the Provisions Warehouse Historic District. Harris Avenue was an early street that was later extended and realigned into the district. The railroad companies continued to construct tracks, bridges, and freight yards in this newly established filled area (Cady, p. 179). Originally, the Provisions Warehouse Historic District area served as freight yards in the railroad expansion project. However, as lands adjacent to downtown and to the railway became more valuable, industries already established in other areas of the city realigned to meet the conveniences promised with the new access of transportation.

The warehouse evolved into a distinct building type in Providence in the second half of the nineteenth century. Storehouses, usually relatively small general storage buildings, had existed as early as the eighteenth century, when Providence's shipping industry began its rapid expansion, and freight warehouses for rail transport were erected as part of the first Union Station complex in 1848 (Sanderson and Woodward, p. 127). The oldest extant warehouse in Providence is the Earle Warehouse (ca. 1800), 369 South Main Street. An exclusive warehouse storage business, however, was not completed until 1882, when the Providence Warehouse Company was organized under state charter. The building (demolished) stood on Aborn, Mason, and West Exchange Streets. Other companies followed, warehousing cotton and other long-storing products. By the end of the nineteenth century, the creation of safe environments for valuable products and the maintenance of heated or cooled climates for particular commodities became significant considerations in storage building construction.

In Providence, food supplies were in demand to feed the growing urban population, which tripled between 1830 and 1865 and increased sharply again during the peak of industrial expansion in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The trend toward urbanized living required centralized sources for successfully supplying goods to the industrial and commercial centers. As people from rural areas moved to the city and immigrants were drawn to the mills, the problems of providing food without the waste likely with perishable

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goods became an important issue. By the middle of the century, both warehousing and cold storage technologies were being developed to improve the storage and long-term preservation of foods and other commodities.

The Market Square area remained the primary location for wholesale produce and meat dealers in Providence until the early twentieth century. Most were located along the "Bridge" over the Moshassuck River on Canal Street. The Bridge, formerly known as the Weybosset Bridge, had been the site of a bridge since the seventeenth century. By the late 1800s, through a series of widenings, it accommodated a number of provisions businesses on the East Side. Warehouses along the Bridge near South Water and Dyer Streets were used by fruit and produce merchants, and sections of the streets, surrounding open lots near the river, were leased to market gardeners for early morning trade (Cady, p. 238). Freight cars came by rail to Dyer and South Water Streets, "from which bananas and other produce were discharged and transported by long lines of men to the cellars of warehouses" (Cady, pp. 238-39). By the late nineteenth century, as the Market Square area became more congested with traffic, and the competition among farmers and other suppliers became more intense, some merchants sought more stable locations and longer-term storage for their perishable products.

With the backing of other provisions merchants, Israel B. Mason, owner of a local pork processing company and cold storage warehouse, made the first major expansion into the Provisions Warehouse Historic District. Upon his return from Europe, where he had studied the cold storage field, Mason decided to leave his processing business and 50,000 cubic feet of cold storage at 173 Canal Street in the Market Square area and began construction of a new state-of-the-art cold storage facility. In 1894, the Merchants' Cold Storage Warehouse Company building (MCSW) was constructed on the newly created Kinsley Avenue with a rail spur connecting it with the nearby New York, New Haven & Hartford line. The MCSW's policy was never to buy or sell goods that it handled so it would be uninfluenced by competition. The company considered itself to be a "quasi-public institution" (Ice and Refrigeration 1897, p. 96). Designed as a collaborative effort between the locally important architectural firm of Stone, Carpenter, & Willson, architects and the engineer, George Leach, the MCSW opened for business on June 1, 1894. The building had more than one million cubic feet of storage space by 1899. By 1910, all additions included, it was able to store up to three million cubic feet, making it the largest cold storage plant in New England outside of Boston (Providence Board of Trade Journal, September 1910, p. 389).

During the period from approximately 1894 to 1917, MCSW stored produce for the Canal Street merchants who backed Mason's venture. Among them were Louis H. Comstock, director of the Oakdale Manufacturing Co., manufacturers of butterine; W.W. Whipple, receivers of butter, eggs, and poultry; and others associated with food processing and distribution. In 1911, the Merchants' Company changed its name to Merchants' Cold Storage & Warehouse Co. (MCSW). In 1917, the company constructed the Terminal Building (HABS No. RI-412) at what is now 11-25 Terminal Way and 184 Kinsley Avenue for the purpose of adding wholesale distribution store rooms. Also that year, an addition to the west side of the MCSW building was constructed to house the Turner Centre Creamery. The surrounding area was characterized at that time by various industries unrelated to provisions. The exception was the Providence Ice Company (demolished in 1929), which was established in 1909 on the lot now occupied by Providence Fruit and Produce Building at 4-64 Harris Avenue. In 1992, primarily due to competition from modern facilities, the MCSW was closed and the building was "defrosted" for the first time in its history. Although the offices are still used, the remainder of the building is vacant.

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The next major provisions investment in the area was by Brownell & Field Co. (now, Autocrat, Inc). Founded by Frank O. Field in 1895, the company was originally located on Canal Street, but lost its building to fire in 1898. In 1907 the company constructed a wholesale grocery and coffee and tea processing facility at 119 Harris Avenue. In 1945, the company relinquished their grocery business and focused on their Autocrat-brand coffee and tea business. The name of the company was officially changed from Brownell & Field, Inc. to Autocrat, Inc. in 1977, and their brand name coffee syrup was changed from Arabian Syrup to Autocrat. In 1986, after 79 years at this location, the company moved to the Blackstone Center for Commerce in Lincoln, Rhode Island. The Brownell & Field Co. Building is currently vacant.

Turner Centre Systems (TCS), a dairy company, constructed the building at 135 Harris Avenue in the early 1920s to replace their 1917 facilities at 176 Kinsley/10 Terminal Way. The company did not stay in the new building for long. In 1929, H. P. Hood & Sons, a Boston-based milk processing company of regional significance, purchased the building. The company expanded the building considerably during the 1930s, and it became one of its largest branch facilities. The dairy processing technology installed in the building for controlling pasteurizing temperatures was considered by experts to be splendid example of scientific handling of milk and other dairy products (Providence Magazine, March 1932, page 69). In 1976, the Providence Journal Co. bought the building, but leased the creamery back to Hood and Sons for continued use until the early 1980s.

In the mid-1910s, frustration among local farmers, due in large part to traffic congestion in downtown Providence and a restriction requiring that they leave Market Square by 10:30 a.m. every morning, led to a movement to relocate to a more accessible location. The farmers' desire for a more stable, affordable, and accessible location to sell their truckloads of produce, resulted in the abandonment of the Bridge, and the purchase of land north of the Provisions Warehouse Historic District for the purpose of establishing a large outdoor market (Cady, p. 239). The land consisted of a four-acre tract in the Woonasquatucket valley, between Promenade Street and Davis Park. It was purchased from the Dyer family, and thus was named the Governor Dyer Co-operative Market (extant). At about the same time, a group of local farmers banded together to form the Providence Market Gardeners' Association, one of the oldest successful co-operatives in New England (PJ 3-10-29:M3). Because the farmers' co-operative owned the land rather than the city, as was the case in Market Square, it was free of the city's restrictions. Eventually, the Bridge was officially closed to market gardeners, who then had to go elsewhere to sell their produce (PJ 9-4-29:28). Most joined the co-operative, which afforded them a central distribution site to sell their fresh produce, meats, eggs, fruit and other perishable foods. However, it was not until 1929 that they made plans to construct their first structure, the Governor Dyer Co-operative Market Building, designed by Francis Chiaverini, architect.

In 1929, the same year the Governor Dyer Market Building was being planned north of the district, the New York, New Haven, & Hartford Railroad Company established the Providence Fruit and Produce Company, constructing their million-dollar building on Harris Avenue, south of the MCSW. While the Governor Dyer Co-operative Market was the creation of local farmers who needed a centralized market to sell fresh produce, the Providence Fruit and Produce Building was the invention of the railroad line to draw local and regional wholesale distributors of fresh produce to use the railroad. The building offered companies the convenience of receiving wholesale produce by means of the railroad lines adjacent to the building. Furthermore, it offered both cold and dry storage space for perishable goods in this building and in the MCSW which was accessed by a tunnel. The railroad and local provisions merchants, who distributed produce locally, collaborated on the establishment of this business venture. Today, some of the original merchants who

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moved here in 1929 still remain in business in this building, the most prominent being Tourtellot. The building provided a much needed wholesale distribution center in the Providence area (Providence Magazine, May 1929).

Wholesale provisions companies continued to construct buildings in this area well into the 1930s. With the repeal of Prohibition on December 12, 1933, opportunities arose for companies such as the Standard Wholesale Liquors Company to establish distribution and sales of alcoholic beverages. In 1937, the Wholesale Liquors Company constructed a two-story building at 115 Harris Avenue, and remained in business there until the late 1950s. Other buildings added to the district in the 1930s included the Costello Brothers, a tobacco and liquor distributing company constructed a building at 111 Harris Avenue (HABS No. RI- 411).

Also added to the district during the 1930s was the Silver Top Diner (ca. 1937), which served the neighboring MCSW's and produce market's employees, who worked day and night shifts. Diners typically were placed in industrial areas where long hours and inconvenient locations required that workers have nearby and inexpensive dining. The earliest known diner, invented in Providence by Walter Scott, was merely a truck that traveled around to serve the late-night and early-morning dining needs of the factory workers. By the 1930s, sophisticatedly designed diners were sold through catalogues. The Silver Top Diner is an intact example of a model sold by the Kullman Diner Company of Harrison, New Jersey.

The final phase of significant development for the area occurred in the 1940s when two more provisions companies— Armour & Company and M.T. Marcello Company, both meats processors—constructed buildings there (HABS Nos. RI-409 and RI-410). During the mid-twentieth century, there was little new building construction in the area. The few exceptions include the addition of another diner, the Fairway, in the 1950s at 87 Harris Avenue on the lot owned by MCSW. It remained on this site until the early 1980s when the owners demolished it. Two gas stations (not extant) were located at 7 Harris Avenue and 97 Harris Avenue. Both were gone by the early 1960s.

The major recent development activity in the area was the expansion of the Providence Journal Company's distribution facilities. Although the Journal had occupied space in the Terminal Building at 184 Kinsley Avenue as early as 1920, it was not until several years later that they built a one-story warehouse at 200 Kinsley Avenue (ca. 1937). That building is now part of the Providence Journal Co.'s plant at 204 Kinsley Avenue, which was completed in 1988. In 1976, the Journal bought the buildings owned by H.P. Hood & Sons at 135 and 145 Harris Avenue. However, Hood continued to lease the creamery until 1986. At present, the Providence Journal Co. uses the surviving Hood buildings on Harris Avenue for storage and for distribution of newspaper inserts. Garages, which once served the fleet of Hood delivery trucks were demolished to make way for the Journal's modern facilities.

A significant change in the Provisions Warehouse Historic District during the last ten years has been the vacancy of a number of buildings. Distributors have either gone out of business or have moved to more modern facilities outside the city center. By the 1980s, rail lines were discontinued, allowing businesses to be sited away from rail lines. Technological shifts in food storage and transport have also been a factor. For example, according to people in the local meats business, within the last two decades, the need for local breakdown and processing of slaughtered animals has been replaced by meat companies in the western states using advanced technology for preservation and transportation of meats, such as "Cryovac" vacuum bags

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that allow for long-term meat preservation. The "store ready" meats from western states is transported by refrigerated trucks to eastern markets. Historic buildings in the district that are still in active provisions use are Providence Fruit and Produce, Silver Top Diner, and the 11-25 Terminal Way section of the Terminal Building.

PART II. DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

The Provisions Warehouse Historic District is a collection of 11 buildings that represent a continuum of industrial engineering and architectural styles from the late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century. Although stylistic elements from various periods are employed in the district, building function is the definitive influence on form and appearance. The buildings reflect stylistic standards prevalent at the time of their construction and range in style from the Gothic-inspired Merchants' Cold Storage Warehouse (1894 et seq.), the Mission Style Terminal Building (1917) (HABS No. RI-412), to Art Moderne style buildings, including Costello Brothers (ca. 1939) (HABS No. RI-411), Providence Fruit and Produce Building, 4-64 Harris Avenue (1929), and the M.T. Marcello Company, 105 Harris Avenue (1947) (HABS No. RI-410).

As a group, the food and commodity warehouses in the district provide a record of this specialized building type over a period of more than 50 years. No other location in the city possesses the temporal and stylistic range and the quality of these buildings. Market House is the only surviving building of the warehouse district at Market Square on Providence's East Side, and the Governor Dyer Co-operative Market buildings north of Promenade Street are fewer and generally smaller and simpler, reflecting their ownership by local growers.

The Provisions Warehouse Historic District of Providence is a readily definable area northwest of the city's central business district and southwest of the Rhode Island State House and its neighboring collection of civic buildings. It is physically separated from adjacent commercial, industrial, residential and civic areas by distinct, man-made and natural boundaries. The triangular-shaped area of approximately four acres is bounded on the north by the Woonasquatucket River, on the east by US Route I-95, on the south by railroad tracks, and on the west by modern construction and the Pleasant Valley Parkway overpass. Within these boundaries, Kinsley and Harris avenues, which intersect at the far eastern end of the district, remain the two main thoroughfares of the area, conforming to the river and rail lines that bound them. Terminal Way, a secondary north-south road that serves a large cluster of wholesale provisions businesses, connects Harris and Kinsley avenues in the middle of the district. Merchants' Way, which once connected Harris and Kinsley avenues on the east side of the Merchants' Cold Storage Warehouse (MCSW), has been closed to through traffic, and is currently part of the MCSW parking lot. The area is devoid of landscaping, and spaces between buildings are streets, rail lines, or paved parking.

The district includes 11 buildings, two tunnels, and a freight-car railroad-spur system constructed between 1894 and 1947. The primary function of the buildings was to provide for storage, processing, and distribution of wholesale perishable foods, including meats, eggs, fruits, and vegetables. The tunnels were constructed to connect the MCSW, the main storehouse of the area, with the neighboring Terminal Building, which contained storage spaces used by a variety of business and depended on the MCSW for cold storage. Nearby, other companies built their own cold storage units and food processing (dairy, coffee, tea, and meat) and distribution facilities. The district also contains several dry storage buildings and one diner.

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The first building constructed in the Provisions Warehouse Historic District was the MCSW (1894) at 160 Kinsley Avenue. Incorporating the most current technologies of the day, it is an excellent example of the Late Gothic Revival style applied to a late-nineteenth-century industrial building. It was designed by the architectural firm of Stone, Carpenter, & Willson, in conjunction with George Leach, engineer. The building's Gothic exterior treatment may have served as advertising for the quality of service provided within.

Typical of the time in which it was constructed, the MCSW has heavy timber interior framing, load-bearing masonry walls of brick with few windows, brick and stone trim, and multi-pane wood sash windows. Decorative elements include recessed Gothic Revival style arches, corbeled belt courses, and drip mouldings. The building originally contained 300,000 cubic feet of refrigerated space carried on substantial wood beams and posts, a framing system used throughout the subsequent additions to the building in 1896 and 1899.

The MCSW represents one primary and two secondary construction periods. Historically, architecturally, and technologically, the first phase period of construction is the most significant, comprising its original construction in 1894 and the additions made in 1896 and 1899. The second phase of construction occurred with the addition of the Turner Centre Creamery at 176 Kinsley Avenue/10 Terminal Way in 1910 and the Terminal Building, which was built in 1917 and is located across Terminal Way to the west. The third was the conversion of the entire nineteenth-century cold storage space to freezers in the 1950s. Also at about this time, in 1946, a fur storage section was attached to the MCSW on its west side.

The building contains more than 1,000,000 cubic feet of storage space along with machinery and office areas. It fills the majority of the lot, stretching between Kinsley Avenue on the north, Harris Avenue on the south, Terminal Way on the west, and the former Merchants' Way, now a parking lot, on the east. The cold and freezer spaces, which stretch toward Harris Avenue, although the result of three phases of additions, are identical in exterior finish and appear indistinguishable from one another. All sections are six stories tall topped by a continuous elaborate cornice with drip moulding running along the roof line. The first story has sheltered platforms on both the east and west elevations. The east elevation served wagons, then trucks, while the west elevation received freight trains on an adjacent rail spur. All three sides of the cold storage sections are enclosed by bays of five-story blind panels with Gothic arches that frame rectangular windows, most of which have been sealed with red brick. The sixth floor windows sit atop the arches.

The oldest section of the MCSW lies on the Kinsley Avenue (north) side of the lot. It is eight bays on the north elevation, eight bays on the west elevation, and six bays along the east elevation. The south elevation, originally was five bays, but is obscured by later additions. The exterior possesses the most elaborate architectural ornament, including large, two-story, wood sash topped with lancet arches with decorative brick work. A brick belt course runs between the second and third stories, and a brick corbeled cornice runs along the roof line. Third-story windows are 6-over-6 wood, double-hung sash. Rusticated stonework is used for sills, foundation, and stairs. This section held the three-story boiler room, engine room, offices, and tank room. The exterior and interior massing are fully intact. The 1899 expansion added a two-story store house (northwest corner) to the original building. Located near the base of the rail spur (north), the smokestack, approximately 100 sq. ft. at its base, had cornice and drip moulding along the top when it was completed in 1894. It appears that when the 1917 Terminal Building was constructed, the stack was extended, losing its original architectural details.

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The storage sections of the building stretch from north to south. The first six bays of the east elevation and five of the west elevation are the 1894 section of the building. Both the following three bays of cold storage areas added in 1896 and the seven bays added in 1899 were designed by George Leach, engineer. This portion of the building has been partially obscured on the east elevation by an early-1950s, seven-story elevator tower. Also added in the 1899 expansions were the dry storage areas attached to MCSW's west elevation on Terminal Way.

The interior of the building is composed of two primary sections: the northern, three-story section of MCSW, located along Kinsley Avenue; and the six-story section of the building, the cold storage area, stretching south to cover the remainder of the lot to Harris Avenue.

The northern section interior included the offices, and the boilers, tanks, engines, and compressors that once controlled the temperature for the storage spaces. On the northeast corner, the engine room is two stories in height to accommodate the large machinery it once held. On the north wall, an entrance leading onto Kinsley Avenue is flanked by two large lancet windows. The east wall has three large windows facing into the MCSW parking lot. The south side of the room includes a wall at the east end that adjoins the stair hall and offices. The remaining section of the south wall opens into an area, 27 by 80 ft, which still holds two original 18-foot brine tanks installed in 1894. The west wall leads through a door into the boiler room. The floors in this area are concrete, and the walls are painted brick.

Accessed by an east entrance facing MCSW parking lot, a stair hall leads to the offices that are located on the second and third floors. These rooms are composed of work and meeting areas with original wood finishes. On the third floor, above the engine room, is the MCSW's carpenters shop.

The six-story cold storage area is composed of five sections that are separated by single loaded corridors. The beams are solid wood, with metal bracketing on the northern two 1894 sections. The remaining three storage areas, constructed between 1896 and 1899 have solid wood beams with no metal brackets. Metal coils that held the brine for refrigeration and freezing cover the ceilings of the storage spaces. Walls are composed of two layers of wood holding either cork or mineral wool for insulation. Modern wall covering, in particular, cement panels, covers some of the southern storage areas, while many retain the original wood walls. The floors have two layers of wide wood planking. The second and fifth storage areas have original hydraulic elevators. Until recently, many components of the building's mechanical support systems remained in place. The Kinsley Avenue section (1894 and 1899) once held the machinery necessary for refrigerating this complex. Today, no historic equipment survives in the boiler and engine room.

A series of later building additions were made to the MCSW. However, none of these significantly altered the late-nineteenth-century storage and support buildings. In 1910, MCSW allowed Turner Centre Systems to construct a two-story dairy storage center at 10 Terminal Way. Their time here was short-lived as they constructed a larger building at 135 Harris Avenue in 1923-26. The first floor interior, which was originally coolers, has been altered with modern freezer spaces. The second floor, however, contained offices and still retains tongue-and-groove wall finishes, 6-over-6 wood sash on the interior office walls, and a slanted ceiling with a skylight. The building has its own hydraulic elevator which remains in place, but all dairy equipment has been removed.

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During this period, MCSW added a transformer building to this storehouse on the Terminal Way elevation (west). In 1946 a second building was attached to the west side of MCSW. It was a reinforced concrete-and-red brick building intended originally for fur storage. A. Swift Co. later rented the space for meat storage. The building is a windowless, two-story, structure with a series of blind, red-brick panels framed in concrete. Concrete piers allow an open platform space on the first story's west and south elevations. A three-bay, detached garage (demolished) was added to the south of the fur storage building in the 1940s.

Twentieth-century buildings constructed within the Provisions Warehouse Historic District are between one and three stories in height and are constructed with steel and concrete structural systems, brick and concrete exterior walls, and cast-concrete trim. Windows are usually multi-pane steel sash. These buildings are characterized by elements reminiscent of architect Albert Kahn's work and of Works Progress Administration (WPA) Art Moderne designs for private businesses, schools, and public works building in the 1930s. During this time, one-story plants that allowed horizontal movements of goods became the prevailing form of industrial design, replacing the vertically oriented designs of the previous periods. Buildings designed with those features incorporated modern construction methods such as shifting from load-bearing masonry walls with steel or wood columns to reinforced concrete construction with mushroom columns, which freed wall space for windows allowing increased light and ventilation.

Variation among the buildings is partly the result of their different uses for processing, warehousing, and distribution of food, as well technological changes through time. Solid, windowless exterior walls characterize refrigerator and freezer storage blocks, while large expanses of windows permitted by the building technologies of the early twentieth century were used to light processing spaces. Attention to insulation was necessary for prevention of heat loss, and open areas were necessary for dry storage, processing of meats, and distribution of fruits and other produce. Floor plan designs allowed for different functions within the business, including offices, processing, and storage. Support technology, such as elevators and tunnels, were integral to the engineering of buildings' operations. A notable similarity among buildings was the common need for sheltered loading platforms. As a result of the industry's reliance on the rail for delivery and wagons, then, later, trucks for distribution, most of the buildings in the district have two loading platforms—one along a trunk rail line and one facing a roadway.

These newer construction techniques were employed by the engineering firm of Jenks & Ballou, which designed the Terminal Building (1917) at 184 Kinsley Avenue and 11-25 Terminal Way and the Providence Fruit and Produce Building (1929) at 6-64 Harris Avenue. Later, locally prominent architect Oresto DiSaia designed the M.T. Marcello Company building (1947) at 105 Harris Avenue. Other buildings for which no architects have been identified, but which exhibit typical utilitarian construction methods of the period are: Armour & Company (1943), 100 Harris Avenue (HABS No. RI-409); Costello Brothers (ca. 1939), 111 Harris Avenue; and Standard Wholesale Liquors (1937), 115 Harris Avenue. All these buildings are characterized by horizontality and restrained, shallow modelling of the relief that articulates the concrete treatment.

The Brownell & Field Company Building (1907) at 119 Harris Avenue, was the first building added to the district in the twentieth century. It is a three-story brown brick building with a stone foundation. The Harris Avenue facade is symmetrical with a central arched entrance accentuated by decorative brickwork. Five granite stairs lead to the entrance door. The window openings are topped by segmental-arch lintels partially covered by modern awnings at the first and second stories. Small, paired, 1-over-1 sash define the third

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story, and an overhanging cornice tops the roof line. The west wall rises a few feet above the roof's height. Some machinery for the storage and processing of coffee and tea and for filtering exhaust from the facility are located on the roof. A single rail spur ran along the rear elevation, with a recessed platform for pick-up of goods on the west elevation.

To the northeast of the Brownell and Field Building is the Terminal Building (1917) (HABS No. RI- 412), 184 Kinsley Avenue and 11-25 Terminal Way. This building consists of two major sections, one of which faces Kinsley Avenue, and the second of which faces Terminal Way to the north of the M.T. Marcello Company Building.

The H.P. Hood & Sons Dairy Experts/Turner Centre System (TCS) (1923-26) at 135 Harris Avenue is the westernmost building in the district. It served as a dairy processing center from its construction by Turner Centre Systems in the early 1920s until the 1980s when Hood & Sons vacated the building. Facing Harris Avenue, the main building is two stories in height and is constructed of brown brick with a concrete foundation. All second-story windows have brick segmental-arch lintels. Recessed brick work frames the third-story windows, a feature reiterated in the cornice detailing around the building. The south facade is eight-bays across while secondary elevations run to four bays on the east elevation, and nine bays along the western elevation. To the west of the main building is a one-story office with a rear loading dock built by Hood & Sons in the 1930s.

The eight-bay facade (south) on Harris Avenue is organized into three sections:. The first story has an off-center, four-bay, main entrance block on the west end that accentuates the main offices it housed inside. The entrance section is topped by a concrete projecting cornice with concrete panels below. At either corner of these panels are small rectangles composed of brick. A recessed entrance, in the second bay from the west, is framed by three sets of tall, glass-block window openings. An inset brick frame, punctuated by corners of white tile, encloses medallions with the monogram "TCS". To the east of the entrance section lie four more bays of windows that reach to the cornice of the entrance section. The four remaining sections (east end) on the first story and the second story contain tall windows with 18-pane steel sash. A half-story brick wall extends to the east, opening onto the east elevation's loading platform. To the rear (north) of this building, large garages once maintained Hood's fleet of insulated distribution trucks. However, the Providence Journal removed those buildings to make way for a new Production Facilities Plant at 204 Kinsley Avenue in 1988.

The interior of the building, now used as a garage, printing rooms, and distribution space by the Providence Journal Co., still retains some equipment and fragments of pipes and machinery from its use as a dairy processing and distribution facility. The most obvious remains are the compressors and boilers which survive in the boiler room at the northwest corner of the first floor. To the south of this area, the milk chests and other bottling and can washing areas have been mostly dismantled. Some refrigeration spaces remain with surviving pipes and valves, York Company insulating doors, and at least one Bush brand Freon refrigeration unit. In the basement, surviving cork walls confirm that this area was once used for cold storage. On the second floor, the space used as a laboratory survives, but all machinery has been removed. At the northeast section, a significant portion of the building's second-floor plan was dedicated to distribution.

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At the southeastern edge of the District is the Providence Fruit and Produce Warehouse Co. Building, 6-64 Harris Avenue, constructed in 1929 by engineers Jenks & Ballou in the Art Moderne style. It is three stories in height, and executed in red brick with reinforced cast-concrete piers, platforms, lintels, sills, and foundation. Front and rear sheltered loading docks allowed distribution from trains (south) and trucks (north) for local distribution.

The building was originally 965 ft. long but has since lost its first bay and a railway tower at the east end elevation at 2-4 Harris Avenue. A Route I-95 overpass ramp built in the late 1980s required removal of this section of the building. Subsequently, the east elevation was sealed with concrete block. In all, 64 of the building's original 71 bays survive. On the north and south principle elevations, raised parapets top three-bay sections that serve visually as towers, interrupting the horizontality of the long building's flat roof. The flanking sets of metal sash extend 10 to 11 bays on either side of the raised-parapet sections, and the surviving west corner of the building is framed by a three-bay section, also with raised parapets, that wrap around the corner of the building onto the side elevation. Floors and supporting mushroom columns throughout the building are reinforced concrete. Elevators service each of the units. Basement units, insulated with cork, serve as the coolers with water circulating refrigeration systems and were optional to each tenant in the building. Running along the rear (south) of the building, a tunnel supplies access to utility lines, drains for the cooling systems, and, at one time, access under Harris Avenue to the Merchants' Cold Storage Warehouse.

Adjoining the Brownell and Field Building on the north side of Harris Avenue is the Standard Wholesale Liquors Co. Building (1937) at 115 Harris Avenue. The original function of this building was as a wholesale liquor business. Little ornamentation adorns the flat-roof, rectangular, three-story, brown-brick warehouse structure with a rail spur against its eastern wall. To the west, it lies adjacent to the Brownell & Field Co., 119 Harris Avenue. Unlike any of the other buildings in the district, it does not have sheltered loading platforms either for freight or truck use. Instead, the facade is open to Harris Avenue with a recessed, integral loading area to accommodate trucks. A platform lies at the back wall of the loading space. Horizontal-pattern decorative brick work tops this opening and the corner entrance. Cast-stone, in narrow bands, is the only ornament and serves as the running course between the second and third-story steel sash windows. The cast-stone band also serves as the cornice defining the roof line and the corners of the Harris Avenue facade. In simple contrast, the rail elevation is unadorned with running bond brick punctuated by nine-pane steel sash on the second story and six-pane sash on the third. The foundation is of running bond.

The building's interior retains a significant degree of integrity of surface materials and industrial machinery. Two fully intact elevators manufactured by the Rhode Island Elevator & Machinery Co., Providence, RI and Otis Elevator Co. remain, as well as much of the coffee and tea processing machinery, including a coffee roaster, transport shafts, and storage silos. On the third floor, coffee and tea processing were done in areas supplied by storage facilities on the roof, many of which remain partially in place.

The Costello Brothers Building (ca. 1939) (HABS No. RI-411), 111 Harris Avenue, is located at the northwest corner of Harris Avenue and Terminal Way, bordered to the north by the M. T. Marcello Company Building.

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The Armour & Company building (ca. 1943)(HABS No. RI-409), 100 Harris Avenue, is located at the southern edge of the Historic District, to the west of the Providence Fruit and Produce Warehouse Co. Building.

The M.T. Marcello Company Building (1947) (HABS No. RI-410), 105 Harris Avenue, was designed by local architect Oresto DiSaia. It occupies the center property on the western side of Terminal Way. It is bordered to the north by the Terminal Building, and to the south by the Costello Brothers, Inc. Warehouse.

The only other building types represented in the district are a the diner and a railroad switching station. The Silver Top Diner (ca. 1937), with its streamline metal work "pleated into art moderne rays." (Kittel, p. 8), is an intact example of the diners manufactured by Kullman Diner Company, Harrison, New Jersey, and is the only surviving Kullman Diner in Providence.

The Switching Station (ca. 1935) at 130 Harris Avenue is a small, rectangular, flat-roofed, utilitarian structure constructed of brown brick with steel sash windows. It sits to the west of the Armour & Company structure. It was from here that provisions cars were shunted from the main railway to the side spurs reaching the various warehouses within the District. It is now owned by the National Railroad Passenger Corporation (Amtrak), and is currently vacant.

The Silver Top Diner, 13 Harris Avenue, was constructed circa 1937 by the Kullman Diner Company of Harrison, New Jersey. It is the only one to survive of three diners that once served the Provisions Warehouse Historic District and is still open for business. Signs bordering the streamlined monitor metal roof of the Silver Top advertise infra-red broiling, air conditioning, and vaculator coffee. Laid on a painted brick foundation, the exterior is composed of metal, glass, and chrome. Blue-and-white vertical metal siding wraps around the lower half of the diner, and one of the corresponding blue-and-white metal awnings still remains on the south side. The entrance has been partially altered. A corrugated metal awning and enclosed aluminum enclosure (1980s) now encase the main entrance to the diner, obscuring the double-leaf doors and platform inside. To the north, under the metal monitor roof is a brick section that houses the lavatories, which is an original feature of the diner's design. To this section's northern end is a lean-to, wood-frame structure which was not part of the Kullman design, that serves as additional space for storage. Historic photographs indicate that a large neon sign with "Silver Top Diner" once graced its roof. It has been gone since the early 1980s. Other than the loss of its sign and entrance modifications, the diner remains largely intact.

The diner also maintains a highly intact interior. Powder blue tiles line the base of the counter, and light blue tiles cover the floor. The grill hoods and service areas include Art Moderne-style chevrons and moulded stainless steel in a radiating, fan-like pattern. The wood booths are high-backed, and the ceiling is white with a blue grained pattern. Stools, also original, are chrome with vinyl seats. At the southern end, glass paneled doors with wood framing and flanking mirrors hold original signs that indicate the location of lavatories.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural drawings:

No architectural drawings were identified.

B. Historic views:

A historic view of the Providence Fruit and Produce Building, taken in 1943, is located at the photographic library of the Providence Journal newspaper, Providence, Rhode Island. Photographs belonging to the newspaper are copyrighted material. A xerographic copy of the view has been included with this report with permission from the Providence Journal.

A 1967 aerial view of Providence, showing the tracks of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad, Interstate 95, and the southeastern portion of the Provisions Warehouse Historic District, is located in the photographic archives of the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, Providence, Rhode Island.

Other photographic collections searched for historic views of the Provisions Warehouse Historic District include those of the Rhode Island State Archives, Providence Public Library, and the Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission Library.

C. Interviews:

No interviews were conducted.

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Maps

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PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Rhode Island Department of Transportation (RIDOT), under the auspices of the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA), is proposing to improve ramp access from Interstate 95 at the Civic Center Interchange, Providence, Rhode Island. The construction of ramps for south bound traffic requires the demolition of four contributing buildings in the Provisions Warehouse Historic District, a property that has been determined eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The buildings are the Armour & Company Building at 100 Harris Avenue, M.T. Marcello Company Building at 105 Harris Avenue,

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Costello Brothers, Inc. Warehouse at 111 Harris Avenue, and Terminal Building at 11-25 Terminal Way and 184 Kinsley Avenue. The project Memorandum of Agreement among the Rhode Island State Historic Preservation Officer (RISHPO), the FHWA, and RIDOT outlined stipulations to minimize or mitigate any adverse project impacts on historic properties. One stipulation calls for the recordation of the Provisions Warehouse Historic District and the four buildings slated for demolition to Historic American Buildings Survey standards prior to the commencement of construction.

The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL Inc.) of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, was retained by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., on behalf of RIDOT. This report was compiled in May 1998 by the PAL Inc. project team, including Stephen Olausen, Senior Architectural Historian and Nicolas C. Avery, Architectural Historian. The large format archival photography was completed in March and April 1998 by Robert Brewster of Warren Jagger Photography, Inc., Providence, Rhode Island.

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Date: May 1998

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Site Plan



