

M.T. MARCELLO COMPANY BUILDING
105 Harris Avenue
Providence
Providence County
Rhode Island

HAER No. RI-410

HABS
RI
4-PROV,
200-

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

M.T. MARCELLO COMPANY BUILDING

HABS
RI
4-PROV,
200-
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Location: 105 Harris Avenue, Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island

USGS Providence, Rhode Island Quadrangle, Universal Transverse
Mercator Coordinates:
19.298740.4633280

Present Owner(s): Marcello Realty

Present Occupant(s): Vacant

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The M.T. Marcello Company Building is significant for its associations with the history of the Providence food provisions industry. Established in 1918, the company was one of the leading local producers of meat products. The building was constructed in the Provisions Warehouse District in 1947 was for that time a highly modern and efficient plant. It was designed by noted Providence-based architect Oresto DiSaia, and retains a significant amount of its integrity in terms of its original appearance and machinery used in its meat processing and cold storage functions.

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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 M.T. Marcello Company was founded in 1918, and ultimately developed into one of Providence's most successful local meat processing and distributing firms. The company's original location was on the Canal and Smith streets in downtown Providence. The Canal Street area was established as the center for the city's provisions industry in the early nineteenth century. By the mid-twentieth century problems arising from the area's location in the congested city center prompted a number of concerns associated with the provisions industry to seek new, more convenient locations. Armour & Company (HABS No. RI-409), a prominent national meat processor, relocated its Providence operation to the Provisions Warehouse District, an area that had grown up around the large Merchants Cold Storage Warehouse after its construction in 1893. Following the lead of its competitor, the Marcello Company purchased property in the Provisions Warehouse District between the existing Terminal (HABS No. RI-412) and Costello Brothers (HABS No. 411) buildings at 184 Kinsley Avenue and 111 Harris Avenue, respectively. Oresto DiSaia, a locally prominent architect, was hired to design the new storage and processing facility, which was completed in 1947.

In this building, the company received carcasses of beef and pork from rail cars that delivered from a spur line of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad located on the west side of the building. The carcasses were cut into parts, some of which were shipped directly to markets and restaurants, while others were ground to produce various forms of sausages, including smoked, spiced, and Marcello Company's Clearfield hot dog. In 1991, the meat business was completely discontinued, largely due to competition from more modern operations in the western states. The company continued to provide cold storage services in the building until the mid 1990s. Currently the building is vacant and is in deteriorated condition.

PART II. DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION

The M.T. Marcello Company Building is located in the northwest corner of the Provisions Warehouse Historic District. It is bounded to the north by the Terminal Building (HABS No. RI-412), to the east by Terminal Way, to the south by the Costello Brothers, Inc. Warehouse (HABS No. RI-411), and to the west by a rail spur of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad.

Oresto DiSaia designed the Marcello meat processing, freezing, and cold storage building with Art Moderne detailing executed in blond, hard-fired brick and cast-concrete fluted piers. It stands two-stories high atop a full basement. The horizontal configuration of the building includes eight bays. The corner bays, which enclose the stair halls in the northeast and southeast corners and offices in the southern end, rise above the roof line establishing towers as the corners. The towers are further articulated with small parapets, below which are horizontal panels that indicate the building street number. The towers frame ribbons of four sets of metal sash set into each of the six intervening bays. Sheltered platforms are on both the main (east) and rear (west) elevations. A railroad spur follows along the rear of the building, where the carcasses were delivered into the building. Weighing and distribution of the processed meat and sausage was conducted on the platform at the east elevation and then distributed by trucks for retail sale.

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The interior of the building exhibits construction methods typical of Art Moderne buildings in the Provisions Warehouse Historic District, with various concrete architectural features including mushroom columns, honeycomb ceilings and slab floors. Spaces were organized by function, related to the processing of meats. The first floor had receiving areas for carcasses, including cold storage facilities for hanging beef and pork. Here, the carcasses were broken down, shipped to markets or restaurants, or brought upstairs by a hydraulic elevator (north end) where the meats were then ground, spiced, smoked, and encased in natural or artificial casings by means of machinery that has been removed. On the second floor, there was a spice room, a smoke room, cold storage, and freezer spaces. The offices were located near the east entrance.

The refrigeration system for the Marcello Building was an ammonia system with circulating brine. Frick Company industrial compressors were used for refrigeration until the 1970s when a Freon refrigeration system was installed to replace this ammonia system. Some of the machinery from both systems still remains.

The M.T. Marcello Company Building retains much of its historic appearance. The exterior fabric of the structure has suffered only minor cosmetic damage. The structure was vacated of its production facilities fairly recently, and the first floor is currently rented as storage space by a provisions company located in the Terminal Building (HABS No. RI-412). Traffic in the building is therefore fairly regular, which has kept the interior from falling into great disrepair and from being vandalized. Other floors in the building have suffered minor cosmetic damage due to lack of daily maintenance. Overall the building is in fair condition.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Architectural drawings:

No architectural drawing were identified. Repositories searched include the Rhode Island State Archives, Providence City Archives, Providence Public Library, Rhode Island Department of Transportation, Providence Journal photographic archives, and Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission Library.

B. Historic views:

No appropriate historic views were identified. Repositories searched include the Rhode Island State Archives, Providence City Archives, Providence Public Library, Rhode Island Department of Transportation, Providence Journal photographic archives, and Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission Library.

C. Interviews:

No interviews were conducted.

D. Bibliography:

Moyer, James A. and Raymond U. Fittz.

1928 *Refrigeration Including Household Automatic Refrigerating Machines*. McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York.

The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc.

1994 *Provisions Warehouse Historic District National Register of Historic Places Evaluation*. Submitted to Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc. and the Rhode Island Department of Transportation, Providence, Rhode Island.

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, 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.

Prepared by: Nicolas C. Avery

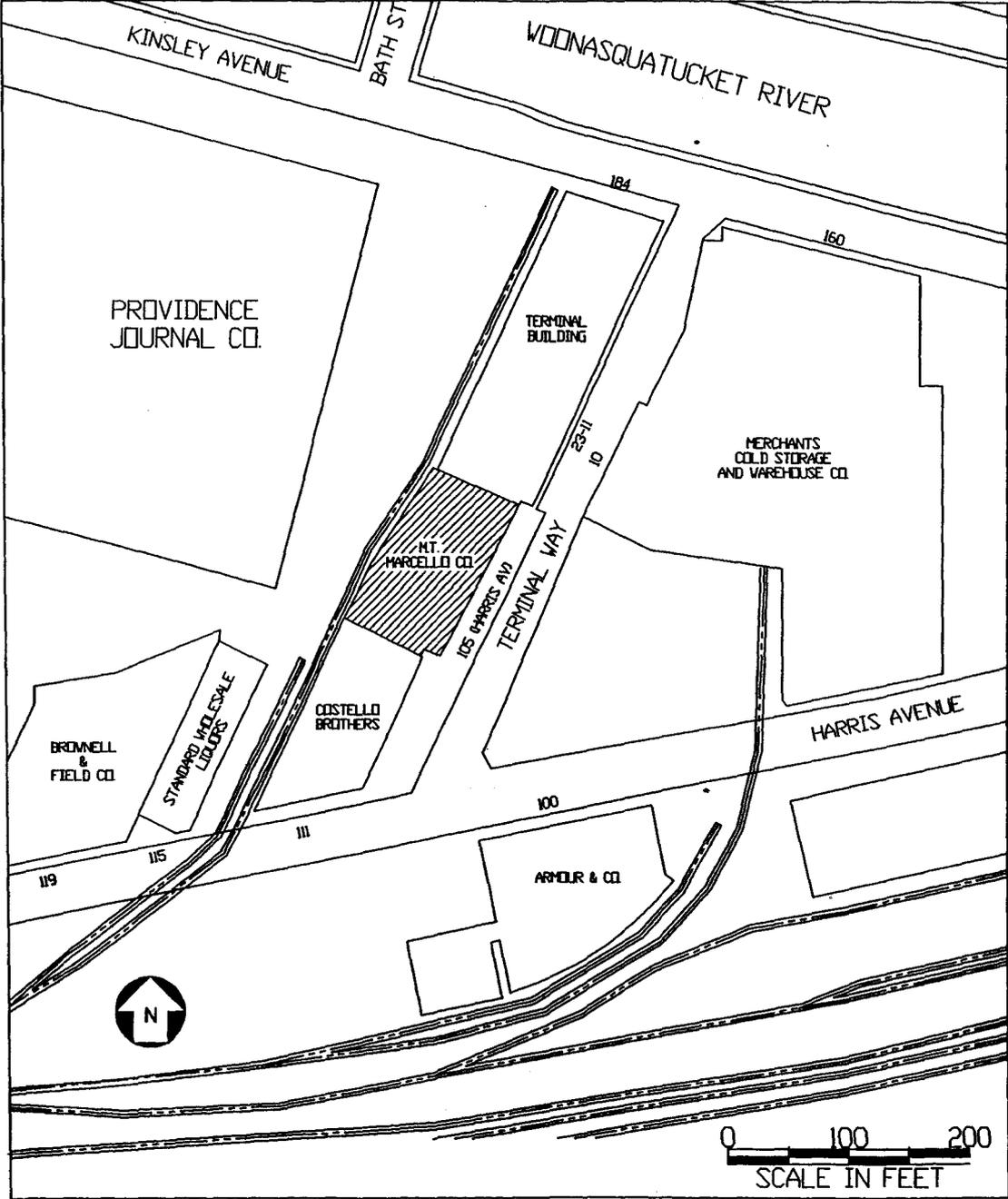
Title: Architectural Historian

Affiliation: The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc.

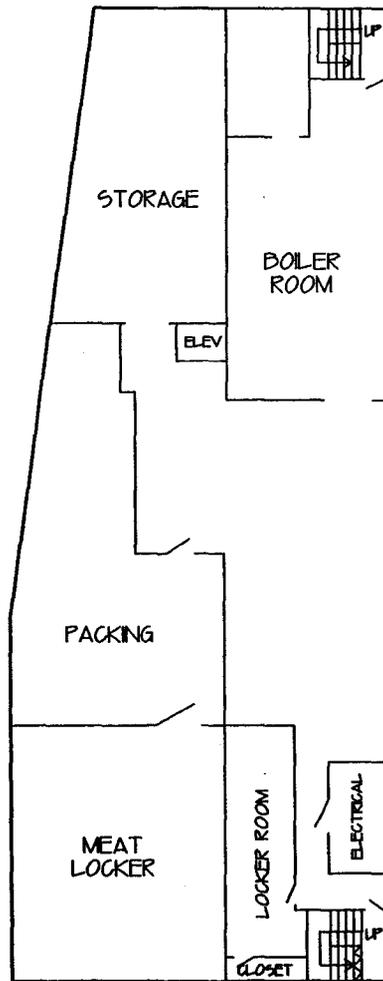
Date: May 1998

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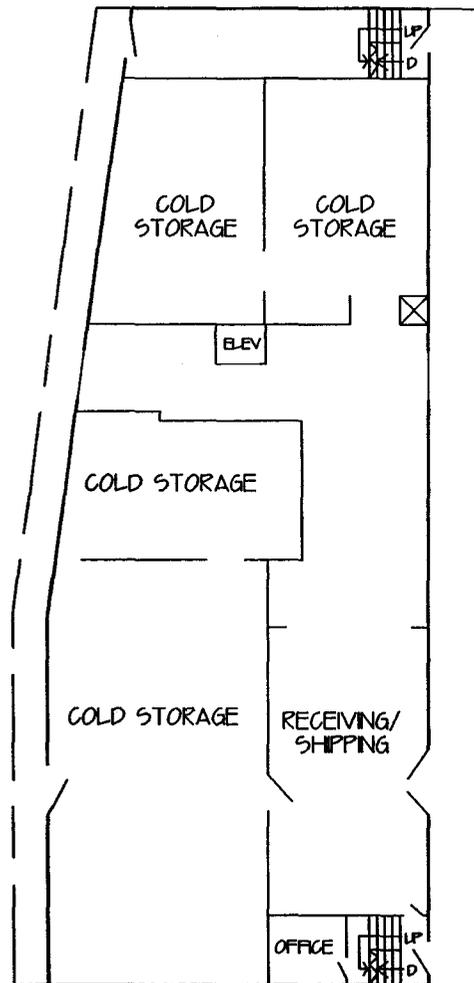
Site Plan



Basement Plan



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan

