

<sup>Brothers</sup>  
COSTELLO ~~BORTHERS~~, INC. WAREHOUSE  
111 Harris Avenue  
Providence  
Providence County  
Rhode Island

HAER No. RI-411

HABS  
RI  
4-PROV,  
199-

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  
COSTELLO BROTHERS, INC. WAREHOUSE

HABS  
RI  
4-PROV,  
199-  
HABS No. RI-411

**Location:** 111 Harris Avenue, Providence, Providence County, Rhode Island  
USGS Providence, Rhode Island Quadrangle, Universal Transverse  
Mercator Coordinates:  
19.298720.4633220

**Present Owner(s):** Sowhey and Sang M. Park

**Present Occupant(s):** SPC, Inc.

**Present Use:** Light Industry

**Significance:** Constructed ca.1939, the Costello Brothers, Inc. Warehouse is significant for its associations with the development of the Provisions Warehouse District of Providence. The building housed Costello Brothers, Inc., an important local distributor of various brands of liquor, tobacco, and confectionary products. The building is also significant as a refined example of the Art Moderne style as it was applied to industrial structures throughout the United States in the mid-twentieth century.

[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**

Costello Brothers, Inc. was established about 1927 by Bernard A. and Joseph E. Costello. Initially located on Sabin Street in downtown Providence, the company soon developed into a prominent local supplier of tobacco and confectionery products, including a wide variety of cigarettes, cigars, and pipes, and candy. With the repeal of Prohibition in 1933, the company expanded its operations to include the distribution of alcohol. It acquired the exclusive local distribution rights to the Four Roses brand of liquor and, later, Rupert Beer, which was popular in the 1940s and 1950s. Other products sold by the company at various times during its history included cameras, watches, clock radios, and small household appliances.

The success of the company's tobacco and alcohol products enabled the construction of a large warehouse and retail building at 111 Harris Avenue in the Provisions Warehouse District. The site offered the advantages of a dedicated rail spur off the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad and more space to expand the companies operations. Costello Brothers was the second alcohol distributor to locate to the Provisions Warehouse District, following the Standard Wholesale Liquors Company, which constructed the building at 115 Harris Avenue in 1937. Completed about 1939, building served as the Costello Brothers business location until 1983. Since that time, the property has been owned and operated as a jewelry production studio and retail store by Sowhey and Sang M. Park.

## **PART II. DESCRIPTIVE INFORMATION**

The Costello Brothers Building is perhaps the most refined example of the Art Moderne style in the Provisions Warehouse Historic District. It remains significantly intact except for changes on the street level where windows have been enclosed and covered with a pink crushed-stone wall surface. The remainder of the building retains original windows, platforms, and wall treatments.

This two-story, flat-roof building wraps around the northwest corner of Harris Avenue and Terminal Way in the western third of the Provisions Warehouse Historic District. It is bounded to the north by the M.T. Marcello Company Building (HABS No. RI-410), and to the west by a rail spur of the New York, New Haven & Hartford Railroad. It is composed of a variety of materials including limestone, cast-stone, and red-and-blond brick. The foundation is laid up in blind, horizontal panels of cast-stone. The main door, serving pedestrian traffic, is situated at the corner, facing Harris Avenue. This angled and articulated, corner entrance block rises slightly above the neighboring brick sections of the building: two bays face Harris Avenue and two bays face Terminal Way. At each corner of the entrance block, second-story windows retain their original steel sash windows, framed by recessed panels and fluted pilasters topped with a radiating sunburst motif. The first story, where the pedestrian entrance remains on Harris Avenue, has been slightly altered with the pink crushed-stone wall covering. Original steel sash above the wall covering confirms that windows once were employed around the entrance.

The brick section (south) of the Harris Avenue elevation extends to the west beyond the entrance block for approximately 40 ft. This section has two panels of three sets of steel sash. Each panel, separated by a fluted pilaster echoing the entrance block, has decorative brick work extending from the top of the first-story windows to the sills of the second story. On Terminal Way, the entrance block extends two bays to the north. A seven-bay block of sheltered loading areas extends along the first story. The second story has small eight-pane steel sash. The west elevation, which is composed of blond brick, stretches along a rear where the rail spur allowed freight cars in to deliver tobacco, liquor, and other items.

Some modernization of the interior has occurred, but many of the building's original finishes remain. The interior space at the Harris Avenue entrance once served as a salesroom. Although some areas have been subdivided with drop ceilings and partitions have been added to previous open storage spaces, features such as inlaid wood railings, show cases, and shelving remain from its use as a salesroom. In the processing and distribution areas to the rear, original structural beams, wall, floors, and window surrounds are retained throughout.

The Costello Brothers, Inc. Warehouse is one of the historically most intact buildings in the district. The structure has remained in constant use and not undergone alterations through adaptive reuse, or deteriorated due to benign neglect. The exterior of the building retains its original appearance, with only slight modifications: the entrance has been slightly reconfigured for the installation of a security door, and west elevation of the building has had its loading dock removed and its window openings bricked in. The interior of the structure has retained its historic fabric with only cosmetic alterations. The building never went through a period of vacancy, which is why it has not suffered damage through vandalism or penetration of the elements. Overall the building is in excellent condition.

### **PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION**

#### **A. Architectural drawings:**

No architectural drawings 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 the 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 the 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.

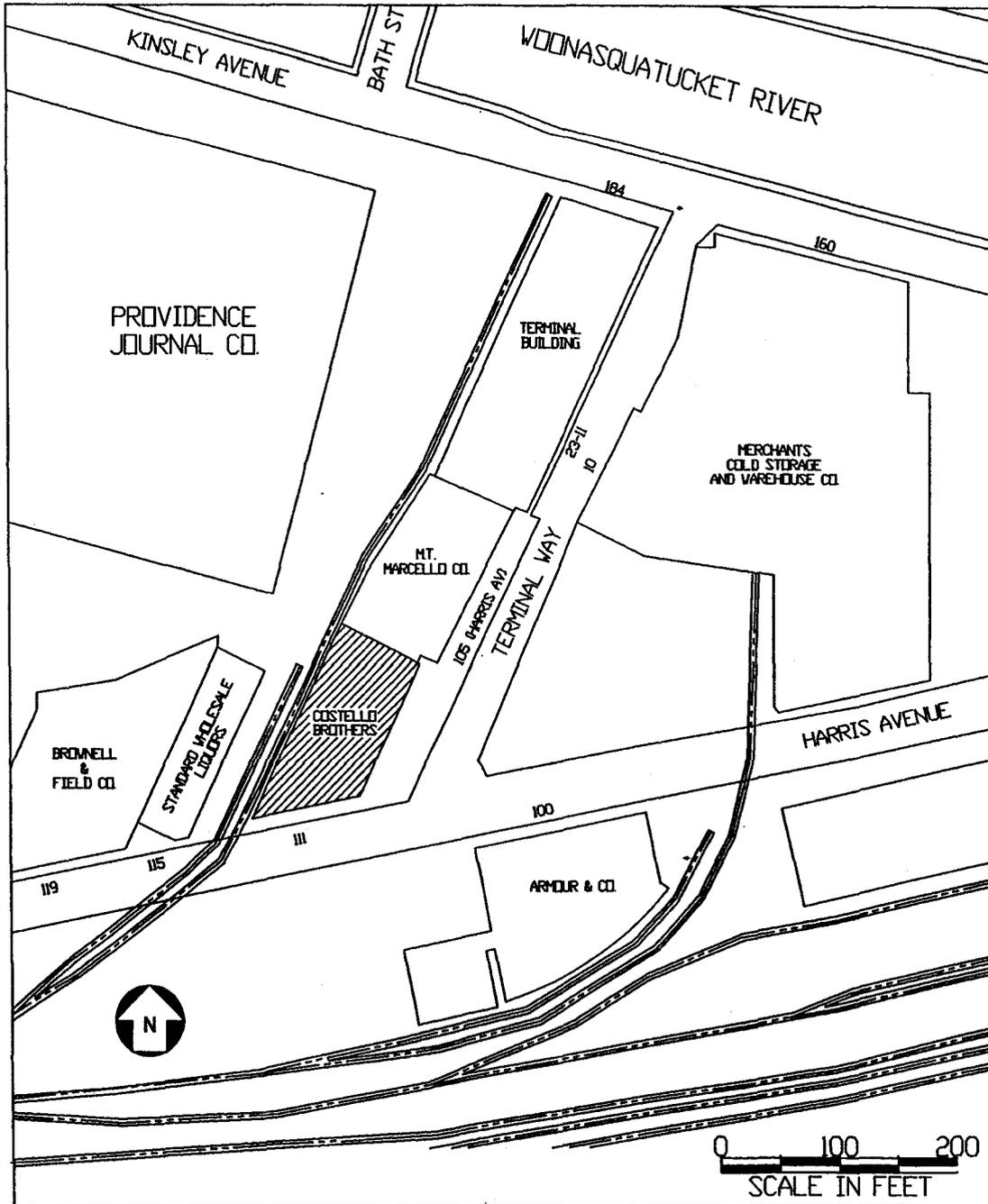
**PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION**

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.

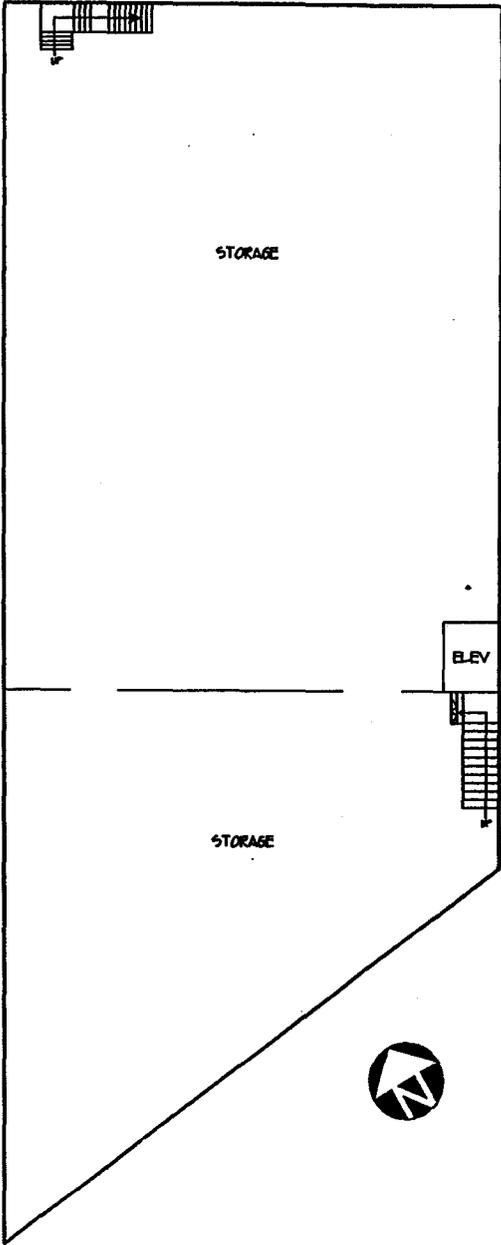
The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL Inc.) of Pawtucket, Rhode Island, was retained by Vanasse Hangen Brustlin, Inc., on behalf of RIDOT. This report was compiled in May 1998 by the PAL Inc. project team, including Stephen Olausen, Senior Architectural Historian and Nicolas C. Avery, Architectural 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

Site Plan

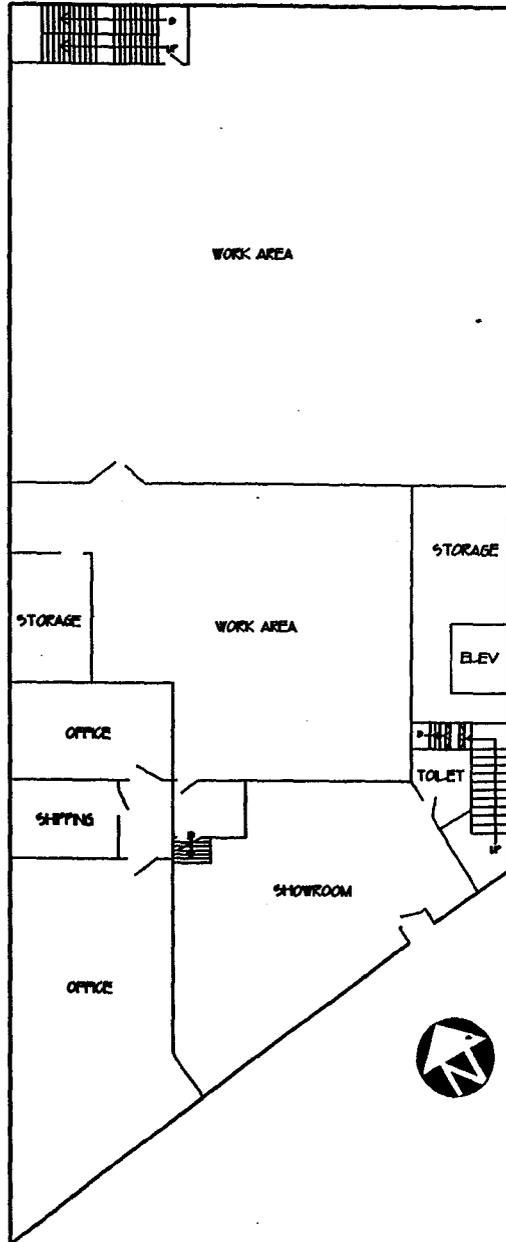


Basement Plan



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**First Floor Plan**



Second Floor Plan

