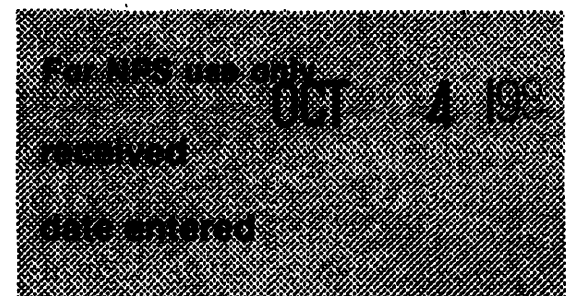


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NAME: Pawtucket Armory
LOCATION: 172 Exchange Street
OWNER: State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
Mr. Arthur Straws, Principal Property Management Officer
Building 2, 610 Mount Pleasant Avenue
Providence, RI 02908

CONDITION: Good; altered; original site

DESCRIPTION:

The 1894-95 Pawtucket Armory is located on the westerly corner of Exchange and Fountain Streets in a neighborhood dominated by the 1925 Tolman High School and a cluster of turn-of-the-century industrial complexes. The armory building is composed of two distinct sections: a 3½-story, rectangular main block facing Exchange Street, and a 140-foot by 80-foot gable-roofed drill hall which stretches along Fountain Street. The exterior walls of both sections are chiefly composed of red brick in red mortar; the slightly battered ground story of the main block, though, is of pinkish-gray granite laid in random ashlar. Reddish-brown sandstone trim (window sills, lintels, beltcourses) is used throughout; similarly colored terra-cotta ornament is used for accent on the main block. Two non-identical round corner-towers distinguish the building's main facade, where a dramatic, round-arched portal in the manner of H.H. Richardson marks the major entrance. Exterior chimney-stacks on both end walls echo the verticality of the towers; the heavily corbeled cornices and crenelated parapets capped with copper sheathing establish an opposing, horizontal emphasis at the skyline. A pair of ornate, wrought-iron gates close across the mouth of the entry portal a somewhat similar wrought iron bracket on the eastern wall of the building may originally have been used in connection with a freight hoist.

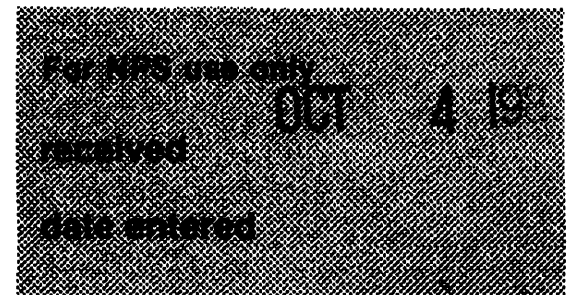
Window openings in the first story of the main block are round-headed; all other windows, except five large lunettes in the end wall of the drill hall, are flat-headed. The rectangular window openings of the second and third floors of the main block are linked vertically by slightly recessed panels; exceptions are the two sets of small, paired windows on the front facade, where two round terra-cotta medallions (representing the seals of the United States and Rhode Island) are placed between the upper and lower pairs.

Entry into the armory is gained through a trio of massive, three-panel doors in the recessed entry foyer. A central corridor runs back from the doorway to the near end of the drill hall; a broad, double-run staircase placed in the northwestern corner of the main block leads to

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the upper and basement floors. Offices and storerooms fill the main block. Architectural details, though sparse, are Richardsonian in character--foliate carving on the staircase newel heads and on the brown-stone mantel shelves and round-arched carved reveals in the major offices. A few pieces of heavily profiled, golden oak furniture found in some of these offices may be part of the building's original complement.

Virtually the entire interior of the drill hall is an uninterrupted open space. A series of arched steel trusses support the roof without the aid of any other interior support. A small wooden balcony/reviewing stand projects into the hall from the second-floor level of the main block; the only intrusions into the hall on the ground floor level are a pair of narrow, partitioned enclosures against the back wall of the main block.

PERIOD: 1800-1899

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Military, Politics/Government

SPECIFIC DATE: 1894-95

ARCHITECT: William R. Walker & Son

SIGNIFICANCE:

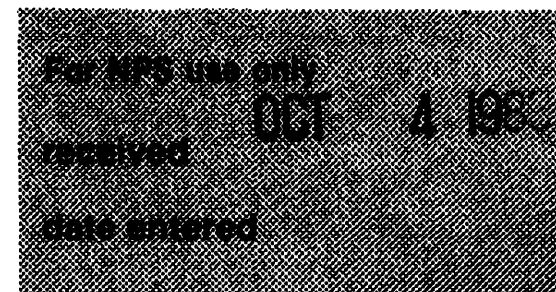
The Pawtucket Armory is architecturally significant as a handsomely designed and little altered late nineteenth-century building type. It is significant, as well, as the work of the important Providence architectural firm, William R. Walker & Son.

Pawtucket has had four different armory buildings within its limits at various times in its history, with the 1894-95 building on Exchange Street being the latest, and the only one of these structures to survive. Pawtucket's first armory building (locally known as "the Alarm Post") was erected on the easterly side of Park Place for the Fayette Rifle Corps in 1825. That organization disbanded in the 1830s and nothing further is known of their building. The next military company to be formed, the Pawtucket Light Guard, was organized in 1857. Two years later, a Gothic Revival armory hall was erected for the Pawtucket Light Guard on the corner of High and Exchange Streets. This building was actively used as an armory during the Civil War years, but was converted to commercial use when the Guard disbanded in 1875. It has since been demolished. A second military company was also formed in Pawtucket during the Civil War years--the Tower Light Battery. Organized in 1864, the new company purchased the old Universalist Church building on Exchange Street and converted it into an armory. This building, known first as Battery Hall, later Infantry Hall, was eventually turned over to the State. This was

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the building which the present brick and granite armory replaced. Infantry Hall itself was given over to the Tower Post, Guard Armory of the Republic, and has since been demolished. The original occupants of the 1894-95 armory on Exchange Street included not only the Tower Light Infantry, but the Pawtucket Horse Guards, Company G of the 2nd Regiment Infantry (Central Falls), and the First Battalion of Cavalry.

William R. Walker & Son (William R., and William H. Walker, the original principals) was one of the largest and most active architectural firms in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Rhode Island. Both of the original principals in the firm had strong military backgrounds. William R. Walker was a Lieutenant Colonel in the Pawtucket Light Guard, served in the Civil War and remained in the State Militia after the war, finally retiring with the rank of Major-General. His son, William H. Walker was a Quarter-master of the General Militia from 1892 through 1918. These military credentials and connections must have been important to the firm's successful efforts to land the commissions for both the 1894-95 Pawtucket Armory and the even larger (and stylistically similar) Cranston Street Armory (1907) in Providence.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nominated property is Pawtucket Assessor's Plat 22B, lot 211, which includes the Armory and its immediate surroundings.

ACREAGE: less than one (37,500 square feet)

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

UTM: A 19 302480 4639000

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