

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Hay and Owen Buildings

and/or common

2. Location 101 and 117-135 Dyer St.

street & number ~~Hay Building, 117-135 Dyer Street~~ not for publication
~~Owen Building, 101 Dyer Street~~

city, town Providence NA vicinity of No. 2, Rep. Claudine Schneider congressional district

state Rhode Island code 44 county Providence code 007

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> NA in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Hay Building--Hay Building Associates (See Continuation Sheet #1).

street & number 117 Dyer Street

city, town Providence vicinity of state R.I. 02903

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City Hall

street & number 25 Dorrance Street

city, town Providence state Rhode Island 02903

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Downtown Providence has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date October 1980 federal state county local

depository for survey records Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

city, town Providence state Rhode Island

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Hay and Owen buildings are located on a trapezoidal site formed by the intersections of Pine, Hay and Dyer Streets, in downtown Providence (see diagram). The buildings appear to be combined into a single block, with their adjoining east facades facing the Providence River. The two structures, however, are separated by a firewall with no interconnecting passages.

The Owen Building, erected in 1868, occupies the northern end of the site. When first built, the structure was divided by a gangway which ran northwest-southeast from Pine to Dyer Streets. By 1882 the passage was covered or built over. A two-bay indentation in the west facade remains from this division (fig. 1). A similar indentation in the east elevation was filled in ca. 1900. To the north of the original passage way the building rises to five stories, with the fifth floor under the mansard roof. The southern section of the Owen Building is four stories with a flat roof, capped by a bracketed metal cornice which runs the entire length of the building.

The east, north, and west facades are sixteen, seven, and thirteen bays, respectively. Photographs from the turn of the century show that the filled in gap on the east facade was already altered to include four levels of large, rectangular windows, each three bays wide. Windows have six-over-six sash throughout, except for narrower four-over-four sash in the pairs in the middle bay of the north facade. Granite ornamental work is kept to a minimum within the flat wall of red, pressed brick. Small corbelled window ledges protrude slightly from the wall surface. Flat lintels, flat brick arches and rounded arches with pointed keystones are found above the windows of the second, third and fourth stories, respectively.

Although ground floor details have been altered, massive granite piers as well as cast-iron columns and cornice remain along the north, east, and west facades. Three pointed lintels mark the entrance to the central portion of the north facade. A single doorway in the middle leads to what is now a restaurant in the basement. Access to additional street-level retail space and to offices above is made from side entrances on Dyer and Pine Streets

The principal elevation of the Owen block faces north, at the beginning of Pine Street. The five-story facade is seven bays wide, including two truncated corners facing northeast and northwest and the central three-bay section which protrudes six inches from the facade (Fig. 2). This central emphasis is reinforced by the granite-framed entrance and the paired windows above it on each story. Above the cornice line, two striated, brick chimneys rise from the central portion to frame a metal-clad dormer, also with paired windows. Two single dormers flank the chimneys to either side. On the second floor of the central section, pointed lintels connect to a double arch group that surrounds a checkerboard brick pattern, evoking a vague Palladian reference. On the third level a flat lintel above the pair of 4/4 windows in the central portion serves to underscore the words "Owen Building," carved above in granite.

(See Continuation Sheet #2).

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1867, 1868

Builder/Architect

(See Continuation Sheet #3).

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Hay and Owen buildings are significant for their architectural and historical associations with the commercial life of Providence during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The buildings are two remaining examples of the historic warehouse blocks once common to the Weybosset Bridge vicinity of downtown Providence.¹

In their present setting, surrounded by parking lots and a highway entrance ramp, the Hay and Owen buildings are the only survivors of a once densely built harborside district. When the two blocks were erected over a century ago, however, the immediate area was a bustling center of commerce at the heart of Providence's port. Ever since the erection of the Market House, in 1773, the Weybosset Bridge area had become headquarters for market vendors. Within a century, docks and warehouses were built along South Water and Dyer Streets in order to accommodate the growing number of fruit and produce merchants. Goods arrived by steamship and by freight cars which were drawn by dummy engines over rails laid on Dyer and South Water Streets (Fig. 6).

George and Smith Owen (born 1805 and 1809, respectively), builders of the Owen block, were proprietors of a jewelry manufacturing firm located on Broad Street and later on Snow Street, in Providence. Although George and Smith Owen never located their jewelry business in their Dyer Street building, George's sons, George Jr. and Charles D. (born 1840 and 1841, respectively) makers of "worsted yarns," and known as the Owen Brothers, occupied the Owen block beginning in 1878. The structure might have been remodeled at this time into its present form.

Alexander Duncan, builder of the Hay Building, was a Scottish immigrant (born 1805) who was related by marriage to Cyrus Butler, the prominent builder of Providence's Arcade (1828) and for whom the Butler Exchange of 1873 was named. After practicing law in New York state for several years, Duncan moved to Providence and became a business associate of Butler in 1839. Soon after the Providence and Worcester Railroad was organized he became its president in 1847. Although Duncan removed to England in 1863, he kept his financial ties with Providence and continued to visit annually. The construction of the Hay Building in 1867 was one of his later business ventures.

¹Weybosset Bridge is the man-made junction over the Providence River which connects the East Side with downtown Providence.

(See Continuation Sheet #3).

9. Major Bibliographical References

Biographical Cyclopeda of Rhode Island, on file at Rhode Island Historical Society.

(See Continuation Sheet #4).

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Providence

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	9	2	9	9	2	0	4	6	3	2	7	6	0
Zone			Easting				Northing						

B

Zone			Easting				Northing						

C

Zone			Easting				Northing						

D

Zone			Easting				Northing						

E

Zone			Easting				Northing						

F

Zone			Easting				Northing						

G

Zone			Easting				Northing						

H

Zone			Easting				Northing						

Verbal boundary description and justification

Plat 20, Lot 96

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

state	code	county	code
-------	------	--------	------

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Howard Maurer/Consultant

organization Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission date September, 1982
August 1980

street & number 150 Benefit Street

telephone 401-277-2678

city or town Providence,

state Rhode Island 02903

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

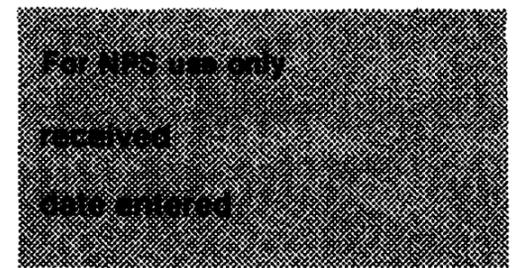


title

date September 30, 1982

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet 1

Item number 4

Page 2

Hay Building (cont.)

Russell R. Shippee, 117-135 Dyer Street, #1A, Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Parnassus Realty, 123 Dyer Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Ira L. Schreiber, 117-135 Dyer Street, #2B, Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Home Owners Title Guarantee Co., 123 Dyer Street, Providence, Rhode Island
02903

P & G Realty Associates, 123 Dyer Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Owen Building

Ekim Company, 101 Dyer Street, Providence, Rhode Island 02903

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet 2

Item number 7

Page 2

Adjacent to the Owen Building, on the southern portion of the lot, is the Hay Building, constructed in 1867. The Dyer and Hay Street facades of the four-story structure are sixteen and fifteen bays, respectively. The truncated southeast corner facing the intersection of Friendship and Dyer Streets is one bay wide. A slate-shingled mansard roof with board-and-batten dormer windows contains the fourth floor (Fig. 4). "1867" is worked into the roof slates at the southeast corner.

The east facade on Dyer Street is composed of cast iron columns with glass infill on the ground floor. On the second and third levels of the Hay and Dyer Street facades the red brick walls are devoid of ornamentation except for granite quoining at the corners, a simple metal cornice below the roofline, and granite letters that spell out "Hay Buildings" in the center of the Dyer Street elevation between the second and third levels.¹ Six-over-six sash windows are capped by narrow splayed lintels. First floor windows of the Hay Street facade have been filled in.

On floors two and three the original warehouse loft space remains unchanged as of this writing. Load bearing walls and heavy timber framing are exposed (Fig. 5). The fourth floor has been subdivided into office space and the ground floor is being outfitted for retail use. The interior of the Owen Building has been completely modernized for office and retail space.

¹The plural name, "Hay Buildings," makes reference to the building which stood until ca. 1930 on the southwest corner of the lot at Hay and Pine Streets. Although the demolished structure may date from the same time as the existing Hay Building, its exact date of construction is unknown.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet 3

Item number 8

Page 2

The Hay and Owen buildings had similar uses. Wholesale produce and dry goods merchants occupied the buildings' upper floors. Retail stores and services, including creameries, groceries, printers and tinware merchants inhabited ground floor shops. Eventually trade patterns changed as merchants consolidated their business practices. In 1918 a group of produce dealers organized the Governor Dyer Cooperative Market on a tract of land in the Woonasquatucket valley between Promenade Street and Davis Park. By 1927 the Providence Terminal Produce Market opened on former railroad property on the south side of Harris Avenue. At this time most Dyer and South Water Street merchants moved to the newer sites. Many former warehouses were left underutilized. As the need for parking space downtown became acute after World War II, several warehouse blocks adjacent to the Hay and Owen buildings were demolished.

The well-built Hay and Owen structures are noted for their fine pressed brick, modest, delicate details and small, human scale. The overall composition of the Owen facade shows a greater resemblance to Alfred Stone's contemporary Thayer Street Grammar School (1868, demolished 1950) than to his firm's slightly later Cheapside Block on North Main Street (1874, extant). The fenestration of both the Owen Building and the Grammar School appears to be "punched out" of a flat wall plane. The brick surface is still the predominant element of the solid-void arrangement. In contrast, the Cheapside elevation is chiefly a hierarchical composition of windows. The brick and stone structural members serve to organize and articulate the fenestration. The Owen block's rather conservative window treatment marks the building as one of Stone's earliest works.

The Hay and Owen buildings are both excellent examples of the Providence waterfront warehouse block of the mid-1800s, and are among the last of this architectural type left in the unit that almost "reads" as one building. Today the buildings are well-preserved. Although given new uses, they retain much of their original fabric and character.

Builder/Architect: Hay Building--Alexander Duncan, builder;
Owen Building--Alfred Stone, architect; G. and S. Owen
builder.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

4

Item number 9

Page 2

Cady, John Hutchins. The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence: 1636-1959. Providence: The Book Shop, 1957.

Chase, David W. "Providence Preservation Society Records of the Owen Building," on file at the Providence Preservation Society, April, 1973.

*Onorato, Robert J. "Providence Architecture 1859-1908: Stone, Carpenter and Willson." Rhode Island History, August-November, 1974, pp. 87-96.

*Providence Sunday Journal Business Weekly, November 27, 1966.

Representative Men and Old Families of Rhode Island, on file at Rhode Island Historical Society.