

MAY 27 2016

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in the Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: William J. Braitsch and Company Plant

Other names/site number: Hearn and Braitsch, Stevens and Company, Colonial Laundry

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 472 Potters Avenue

City or town: Providence State: Rhode Island County: Providence

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this x nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A \_\_\_ B \_\_\_ C \_\_\_ D

	<u>5/24/2016</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>RI Historical Preservation &amp; Heritage Commission</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ Signature of commenting official:	_____ Date
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 removed from the National Register  
 other (explain: \_\_\_\_\_)

Joe Nelson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

7.11.16  
Date of Action

#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:   
Public – Local   
Public – State   
Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)   
District   
Site   
Structure   
Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>	sites
<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>	structures
<u>        </u>	<u>        </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY/manufacturing

COMMERCE/business

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/industrial storage

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER/late-19<sup>th</sup>-century industrial

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK, STONE, CONCRETE

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The William J. Braitsch and Company Plant<sup>1</sup> occupies a .7-acre lot in the predominantly residential Elmwood section of Providence. The property includes two contributing industrial buildings erected in 1892 for the manufacture of silver and gold specialty goods. The main building is a brick, three-story, pier and spandrel structure. Attached to the east elevation of this building is a single-story, brick boiler/engine house with a brick stack. A nearby concrete-block “Dry Cleaning Room” dating to the mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century tenancy of a commercial laundry is non-contributing. All buildings are in generally good condition.

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<sup>1</sup> Although the subject property was built in 1892 as Hearn and Braitsch, the partnership of these two men was dissolved a year later. For the sake of clarity, the property will be identified here as the William J. Braitsch and Company Plant.

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## Narrative Description

### Inventory

#### William J. Braitsch and Co. Main Building (1892)

Sited at the southeast corner of Potters Avenue and Melrose Street, this is a north-facing, three-story (with basement), brick, 162' x 40', pier-and-spandrel building set on a granite ashlar foundation. The roof is shallow-pitched gable and surfaced with membrane. The cornice is wood-framed with exposed rafter ends. The building comprises three bays along the north (front) elevation, facing Potters Avenue, and eleven bays along the sides. Window openings are segmental arch with quarry-faced granite sills. The windows are paired on the front elevation and grouped in threes along the sides. Each window is composed of three, six-over-six, wood sash: the two upper sash are fixed and the bottom sash opens. Most windows are original; in some cases, openings have been filled with particle board, plywood, or concrete block. Segmental arch door openings at the southwest corner of the building and at the east loading dock have been altered to accommodate security doors.

This building is of slow-burning construction: chamfered, square-section timber columns support timber floor beams which, in turn, support two layers of plank flooring. Although there are some partitions that appear to date to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century tenancy of jewelry companies, each floor generally comprises a large open space with timber and/or steel columns and exposed brick walls. Although covered in some areas with concrete or asphalt, most floor surfaces present the original slow-burning plank.

Many of the timber columns and beams on the two lower floors have been reinforced with U-section steel fittings. This strengthening appears to have been necessitated by the installation of a substantial concrete pad on the third floor built to accommodate jewelry plating tanks installed during the tenancy of United Plating (1969 et seq.). On the second floor, much of the plank floor has been surfaced with asphalt. There are two stairwells in the building. A combined elevator shaft and stairwell is located on the east elevation. A back stairwell occupies the eleventh (southernmost) bay of the building.<sup>2</sup>

A significant alteration to the original design was the relocation of the front entrance from the easternmost bay of the front elevation to the center bay. This recessed Colonial Revival entrance dates to the occupation of the building by Colonial Laundry (1928-1964) and appears to have been built ca. 1940.<sup>3</sup> This frame entryway occupies the entire first-floor center bay between piers. The door trim comprises fluted pilasters, a simple entablature and a split pediment. A steel security door now hides the recessed doorway. Although no longer in use, the front door (which

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<sup>2</sup> The 1900 Sanborn map identifies a "vault" within this three-story brick appurtenance, but does not specify its exact location.

<sup>3</sup> A 1940 *Intention to Build* on file at Providence City Archives notes unspecified "improvements" to be made at that time.

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survives behind the security door) opened to a chamber that served as the executive office of Colonial Laundry. This room is notable for the survival of its Colonial Revival woodwork including dentiling, crown molding, fluted pilasters and triglyphs. It also features narrow wood flooring, likely also dating to the ca. 1940 improvements. Above a suspended ceiling in a neighboring administrative area, significant elements of a tin ceiling survive. This appears to be a remnant of the original office for the Braitsch plant as built in 1892.

### **William J. Braitsch and Company Boiler/Engine House (1892)**

Attached to the east elevation of the Main Building, a 35' x 46', single-story, brick boiler/engine house provided power to the main building and, by way of an external shaft, a second factory building (now demolished). This building originally housed a 60 HP Corliss steam engine<sup>4</sup> and two boilers. (One boiler, likely dating to the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, survives.) The roof has two pitches: a main, southern slope above the boiler house that extends to a brick stack, and a smaller northern slope above the engine house. The cornice is wood-framed with exposed rafter ends; the roof is surfaced with asphalt sheeting. The 60' stack stands in a niche along the east face of the building. This stack appears to have been repaired—and perhaps slightly reduced in height—in recent years in order to accommodate several telecommunications panel antennas and a large cable-tray along its east side. A metal coping at the top of the stack appears to be of relatively recent construction. Both the north and south elevations of the building had three segmental arch window openings that are now filled with concrete block. A pair of wood freight doors with angled-plank panels on the east elevation appears to be original.

### **Dry Cleaning Room (between 1939 and 1951, non-contributing)**

A free-standing, single-story, flat-roofed, concrete-block “Dry Cleaning Room” was built by Colonial Laundry between 1939 and 1951. The building measures 22' x 24'. There is one original metal-frame, rectangular window on the north elevation. The roof is supported by steel I-beams. A large original entrance bay is now half-filled with plywood. A modern door occupies the west half of the opening.

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<sup>4</sup> No evidence of group drive machinery survives.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1892-1915  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1892  
\_\_\_\_\_  
ca. 1940  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The William J. Braitsch and Company Plant is significant at the local level under **Criterion A** in the area of industry, as the physical expression of the evolution in 19<sup>th</sup>-century Providence of the silversmith trade from small-scale artisanry to large-scale manufacture of finely-crafted silver goods.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

William J. Braitsch (1863-1951) was born in New York in 1863 and was educated in the city's public school system. By 1878 at age fifteen, Braitsch was working or apprenticing at Tiffany and Company learning the trade of silver chaser, a highly-skilled process of forming and applying design to precious metal, most notably silver.<sup>5</sup> While working at Tiffany, he completed a one-year program in Form Drawing at Cooper Union in 1879.<sup>6</sup> For two consecutive years, Braitsch received awards for silver chasing while at Tiffany: in 1878 he was awarded a second-place prize *Tiffany and Company Medal to Promote the Arts of Design* and in 1879 he was awarded a first-place prize *For Process in Art and Industry*.<sup>7</sup>

Braitsch and a partner, John Hearn, left Tiffany and Company sometime before 1887, relocating to downtown Providence where they established a shop at 121 Broad Street<sup>8</sup>. This address was part of a full city block housing commercial storefronts at street level and jewelry shops above. The company specialized in the manufacture of silver and gold cane and umbrella heads (see Figures 1 and 2) and manufactured wooden walking sticks to which the elaborate heads were affixed.

In 1891, Hearn and Braitsch purchased twelve lots (numbers 1-11 and 22) of the Melrose Street Estate, near the corner of Potters Avenue and Melrose Street, which had been platted in 1872. This original purchase comprised 1.3 acres.<sup>9</sup> Initially they erected a two-story wood-frame

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<sup>5</sup> The English term *chasing* is derived from the French *chasser*, literally, "to chase" in the sense of working precious metal into a shape and applying design from the outside while not chipping away or losing any metal. In the silver trades a distinction is made between *chasing* (in which the material is worked from the outer surface) and *repoussage*, in which the material is worked from an interior surface (e.g., from within a hollow of a pitcher).

<sup>6</sup> *20<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Trustees of the Cooper Union for the Advancement of Science and Art*, 1879 (p. 41).

<sup>7</sup> These medals are in the possession of John Braitsch of Quincy, Mass., grandson of William J. Braitsch.

<sup>8</sup> The building was later re-numbered as 111 Broad Street.

<sup>9</sup> This larger lot has since been subdivided. Providence Land Evidence Book 357:56.

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industrial building at 456 Potters Avenue that stood until about 2010.<sup>10</sup> The following year, in 1892, the partners undertook the construction of the extant brick, three-story industrial building and attached power house immediately to the west of their first building (see Figures 3 and 4). Although the reasons for the initial investment in a more modest factory building are unclear, it is possible that Hearn and Braitsch built the wood-frame building as rental property, with the intention of leasing it to industrial tenants. The following 1892 account offers a look at activities at the new Hearn and Braitsch works:

The works comprise a three-story structure, measuring 40 x 175 feet<sup>11</sup>, and supplied with machinery made especially for this purpose, operated by a Corliss steam-engine of 60 horse-power, and steady employment is given to a force of 135 skilled hands. There are twelve different departments represented here, from designing to finishing, all ably manned, and under expert supervision. The firm receive the gold and silver in bullion or bulk, and fashion it into any form desired for adorning canes, umbrellas, and various other purposes.<sup>12</sup>

The market for silver novelties and accessories expanded dramatically in the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The discovery of huge silver deposits like the Comstock Lode (Nevada, 1859) made silver widely available as a material for luxury accessories for a rising class of wealthy entrepreneurs and administrators of an expanding industrial and commercial economy. Between 1850 and 1900 production of silver in the United States increased some 1,500 fold from 39,000 ounces to almost 60 million ounces. During the same period, the price of silver dropped from \$1.32 to \$.61 per ounce. From modest colonial-era beginnings, Victorian fashion sensibilities yielded a huge national market for silver flatware, hollow ware, presentation pieces and stylish accessories including the silver- and gold-headed walking canes and umbrella handles fabricated at the Braitsch plant.<sup>13</sup>

In 1893, a year after the construction of the new building, Hearn and Braitsch dissolved their partnership. The new concern that followed was called William J. Braitsch and Company. Hearn's interest was purchased by George H. Grant (1850-1921), who had been associated with the Providence retail firm of J.B. Barnaby from 1867 until his retirement in 1892. Hearn's departure may have been a response to general instability associated with the Panic of 1893, an economic collapse rooted in U.S. financial policy and overproduction of silver.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> The earliest tenant of 456 Potters Avenue was Royal Sanitary Carpet Lining Co., occupying this building from 1896 to 1898. By 1899 Crown Carpet Lining Co., perhaps a successor to Royal, was a tenant. After the failure of this company, the space was occupied by Wadsworth Braiding Co., shoelace manufacturer, from 1904 to 1905. By 1906, Stevens and Co. occupied both a floor of the main building and this auxiliary building. These companies took their power from a shaft extended from the Braitsch engine house and its heat from the adjoining boiler house.

<sup>11</sup> This appears to be an approximate dimension. The building footprint has been measured at 40 x 162 feet.

<sup>12</sup> *Industries and Wealth* (1892), p. 85.

<sup>13</sup> *Tiffany Silver*, p. XVII.

<sup>14</sup> One of the provisions of the Sherman Silver Purchase Act (1890), a federal response to populist demands for inflationary coinage of silver as a means of easing agricultural debt, was the requirement that the U.S. mint purchase monthly 4.5 million ounces of silver. The broad effects of this federal involvement

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It appears that the Braitsch operation, with its workforce of 135 designers and industrial operatives and described in an 1892 *Board of Trade Journal* item as “the largest cane factory in the United States,”<sup>15</sup> diminished dramatically in the depression years of the 1890s. Punishing economic conditions may well have engendered changes in Americans’ taste for elaborate walking canes and umbrellas. By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, a discernible change in men’s style showed a shift from that of Victorian excess to a more relaxed and understated comfort.

There are few records available indicating the financial condition of the Braitsch operation during this period. We do know, however, that the workforce of 135 as described in the first year of operation at Potters Avenue (1892) had declined to about 75 by the early years of the new century. *Factory Inspection Reports* for the years 1905 to 1911 show a fluctuating workforce of a high of 50 to a low of 33 operatives.<sup>16</sup> A 1901 advertisement for “silver toiletries” along with the standard cane- and umbrella heads suggests that Braitsch was attempting to diversify his line of manufactured goods and address changing fashion sensibilities. These efforts were apparently unsuccessful; William J. Braitsch and Company closed in 1915.<sup>17</sup>

Even prior to his company’s demise, Braitsch had begun leasing portions of the plant to other industrial tenants. From 1896 to 1898, he leased the third floor to the Whitten Cycle Manufacturing Company (see Figures 5 and 6). The precise metalworking capacity of Providence jewelers and silversmiths firms had much to offer to entrepreneurs of the burgeoning bicycle trade of the 1890s. The capability for precision machining, casting, plating, etc. lent itself well to the requirements of bicycle manufacture. William Wilberforce Whitten, an 1886 graduate of Brown University and cycling enthusiast<sup>18</sup>, formed a partnership in 1887 with fellow Brown graduate Edward A. Godding for the importation, limited manufacture, and sale of bicycle parts. This business, incorporated in 1891, was renamed the Whitten Cycle Manufacturing Company by 1894.<sup>19</sup>

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in the silver market were compounded by overproduction of silver from western mines where, by 1893, silver was selling below the cost of its extraction. Source: Peter Zavodnyik, *The Rise of the Federal Colossus*, Westport, CT: Praeger, 2011.

<sup>15</sup> *Board of Trade Journal* 3 (January 1892): 354. It should be noted that while these items often made hyperbolic claims, Hearn and Braitsch likely presided over one of the country’s larger factories specializing in the manufacture of silver-headed walking sticks.

<sup>16</sup> Providence tax evaluations for the Braitsch plant are inconclusive as to any correlation with the decline of the business. Valuations remain generally steady from 1892 to 1899, at which time a drop a 15% drop in valuation is noted. From 1900 to 1915 the valuation remains stable. Tax books placed in bibliography

<sup>17</sup> This may well have been related to a general decline of the American jewelry industry in 1913-1914. This pre-WWI decline and its causes are well-described in Philip Scranton’s detailed study of the jewelry trade from the post-Civil War to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, “The Horrors of Competition,” *RI History* 55 (May 1997).

<sup>18</sup> Whitten was instrumental in the formation of the Rhode Island Wheelmen, early and influential advocates for good roads. Source: *Men of Progress*, 1896.

<sup>19</sup> By 1903 Whitten had formed the Whitten Motor Vehicle Company. It is interesting to note that the text of an 1896 reincorporation listed the potential manufacture of motorcycles among the company’s activities. Source: Corporate Charters, June 1896, Vol. 1, p. 18. Rhode Island State Archives.

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In 1899, Braitsch leased a full floor (6,400 sq. ft.) to George F. Greene and Co., manufacturing jewelers. This Providence company (established 1891), manufacturing seamless plated stone and band rings, employed about 75 operatives. Greene also manufactured popular scarf pins, securing eight U.S. patents for their manufacture in 1894. Greene and Company remained at the Potters Avenue plant until 1903. On their departure, Braitsch leased space to Stevens and Company, optical goods manufacturers. Stevens and Company opened up a subsidiary operation, Stevens Printing, in 1921. Both companies leased space at the Potters Avenue plant until 1924, when Braitsch took on a new tenant, Butman and Tucker, a large commercial “steam laundry.”<sup>20</sup>

Two years later, Butman and Tucker was one of four Providence-area steam laundries consolidated into a new corporation, Colonial Laundry. Braitsch and Company having closed in 1915, Colonial Laundry occupied the entire Braitsch plant. Although not specific as to the nature of the work, a 1940 *Intention to Build* on file with the City of Providence describes “improvements” at this time that likely represent a significant alteration to the original Braitsch plant. At that time the original façade was modified to move the main entrance to the middle bay of the building. An elaborate Colonial Revival-style entrance (now hidden behind a steel security door) opened to new office space also designed in the Colonial Revival style. Much of that millwork survives.

Colonial Laundry purchased the Braitsch plant outright in March 1948, erecting a free-standing, concrete block “dry cleaning room” (non-contributing) before 1951. In 1965 the plant was purchased by Fairdeal Manufacturing Company and adapted for jewelry manufacture. By 1969 Fairdeal was leasing space within the building to related companies, including Syl-Den Polishing Company and United Plating. Substantial concrete footings surviving on the third floor and steel reinforcements on the timber columns and beams of the first and second floors are likely associated with the structural requirements of this heavy third-floor loading. Fairdeal owned the plant until 1985, when it was purchased by a realty company and transferred to the present owner in 1987. Since that time the building has housed generally low-level uses such as storage.

### **A note on Providence’s silver industry**

Before the early 1830s, silver items were created locally on a small scale by highly-skilled artisans. In 1831 Providence jeweler Jabez Gorham hired silversmith H.L. Webster and commenced larger-scale manufacture of silver spoons and other silver items at his downtown factory. By 1850, under the management of Gorham’s son John, Gorham and Company had become a major manufacturer of silver flatware, hollowware, toiletries and presentation pieces. The company was incorporated in 1863 as Gorham Manufacturing Company. Outgrowing their downtown Providence manufacturing facilities, Gorham relocated south to the Elmwood

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<sup>20</sup> Commercial steam laundries, so named to differentiate themselves from smaller-scale “hand laundries,” used steam power to operate commercial laundry machinery. These industrial laundries were common in the years from ca. 1880 until the Great Depression.

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neighborhood in 1890. From 1831 to 1905 Gorham converted 31,000,000 ounces of silver to manufactured and one-of-a-kind items.

By 1900 there were eight silver establishments in Rhode Island - all located in Providence - employing some 1,500 operatives. In the ten years from 1890 to 1900, the combined capitalization of these firms had nearly doubled from \$2.9 million to over \$5 million. Besides Gorham, smaller-scale manufacturing silversmiths included William J. Braitsch and Co., the W.J. Feeley Co., Fessenden and Co., Manchester Manufacturing Co., New York Silver Co., and Roger Williams Silver Co.

Although there is no historical evidence<sup>21</sup> of an association between William J. Braitsch and the Gorham Manufacturing Company, it is reasonable to assume that the presence of the latter and its massive expansion and relocation in 1890 to the Elmwood section of South Providence along a busy railroad line would have encouraged related investment in silver operations between the two companies.

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<sup>21</sup> Samuel Hough oversees the Gorham collection at Brown University's Hay Library. This collection is, at present, in storage and unavailable to researchers. Hough noted in an email communication (July 15, 2015) that he has no recollection of Braitsch having any formal association with Gorham. Braitsch's grandson, William J. Braitsch II, however, noted that a story has been passed down in the family of a chrysanthemum-motif flatware design by Braitsch (ca. 1914) that remains in the Gorham catalog today. Source: interview with WJB II, July 27, 2015.

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

#### Articles:

Frankovich, George R. "History of the Rhode Island Jewelry and Silverware Industry." *Rhode Island Yearbook* 1971. Providence: The Rhode Island Yearbook Foundation, 1971.

"George H. Grant obituary." *Jewelers' Circular* (16 November 1921): 93.

Scranton, Philip. "The Horrors of Competition." *Rhode Island History* 55 (May 1997).

"Whitten Bicycle Company." *Providence Journal of Commerce* (May 1896): 18-20.

"William J. Braitsch and Co." *Board of Trade Journal* 3 (January 1892): 354.

"William J. Braitsch dies in 88<sup>th</sup> year." *Providence Journal* (19 July 1951): 12.

#### Books:

*Biographical History of the Manufacturers and Businessmen of Rhode Island*. Providence: J.D. Hall and Co., 1901.

Carpenter, Charles H. and Mary Grace Carpenter. *Tiffany Silver*. New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1978.

Davis, William T., ed. *The New England States* (IV). Boston: D.H. Hurd and Co., 1897.

Greene, Welcome Arnold. *The Providence Plantations for 250 Years*. Providence: J.A. and R.A. Reid, 1886.

*Industries and Wealth of the Principal Points in Rhode Island*. New York: A. F. Parsons Publishing Co., 1892.

"Whitten, William Wilberforce" in *Men of Progress; Biographical Sketches and Portraits of Leaders in Business and Professional Life in the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*. Boston: New England Magazine, 1896: 218-9.

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**Government documents:**

*19<sup>th</sup> Annual Report of the Commissioner of Industrial Statistics.* Providence: E.L. Freeman and Son, 1906.

*Annual Report of the Factory Inspectors (1895-1915).* Providence: E.L. Freeman and Son.

*Intentions to Build.* Cards on file, Providence City Archives.

*City of Providence Tax Books,* 1892-1915.

**Interviews:**

William J. Braitsch II (grandson of William J. Braitsch), July 27, 2015.

John Braitsch (grandson of William J. Braitsch), July 31, 2015.

**Maps consulted:**

*(listed chronologically)*

1889 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map (also, 1900, 1904, 1921, 1951, 1956, 1972).

1895 Everts and Richards. *New Topographical Atlas of Surveys, Providence Cty., RI.*

1908 *Plat Book of the City of Providence, Rhode Island* (also 1918 and 1926).

1937 G.M. Hopkins. *City of Providence Plat Map.*

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):**  N/A

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property**  .7 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |



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**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927    or     NAD 1983    (1929 Datum)

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 19 | Easting: 298597 | Northing: 4630545 |
| 2. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 3. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 4. Zone:    | Easting :       | Northing:         |

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundaries of the William J. Braitsch plant are contiguous with those of Providence, RI Assessors Plat Map 49 Lot 353.

**Boundary Justification**

The William J. Braitsch and Company plant occupies a part of the original 1.3-acre Melrose Estate Plat as purchased by William J. Braitsch et al. in 1890 and subdivided to the present .7-acre lot in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The nominated property includes the two surviving historic buildings constructed by William J. Braitsch and John Hearn in 1892: the main building and boiler/engine house.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Edward Connors  
organization: Edward Connors and Associates  
street & number: 39 Dyer Avenue  
city or town: Riverside state: RI zip code: 02915  
e-mail: nconnors@cox.net  
telephone: 401 595-0699  
date: July 2015

William J. Braitsch and Company Plant  
Name of Property

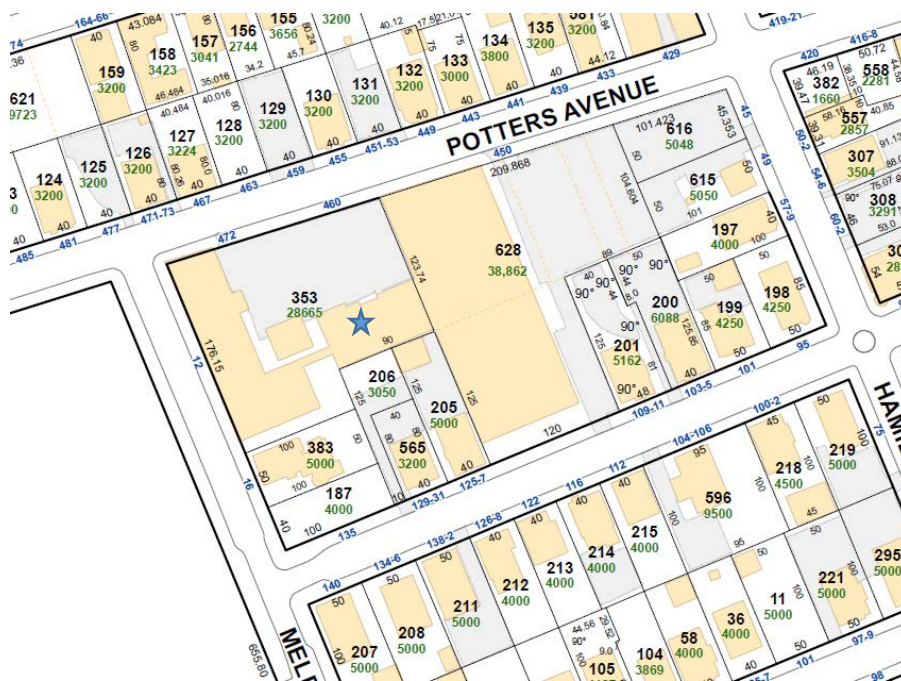
Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### Photographs

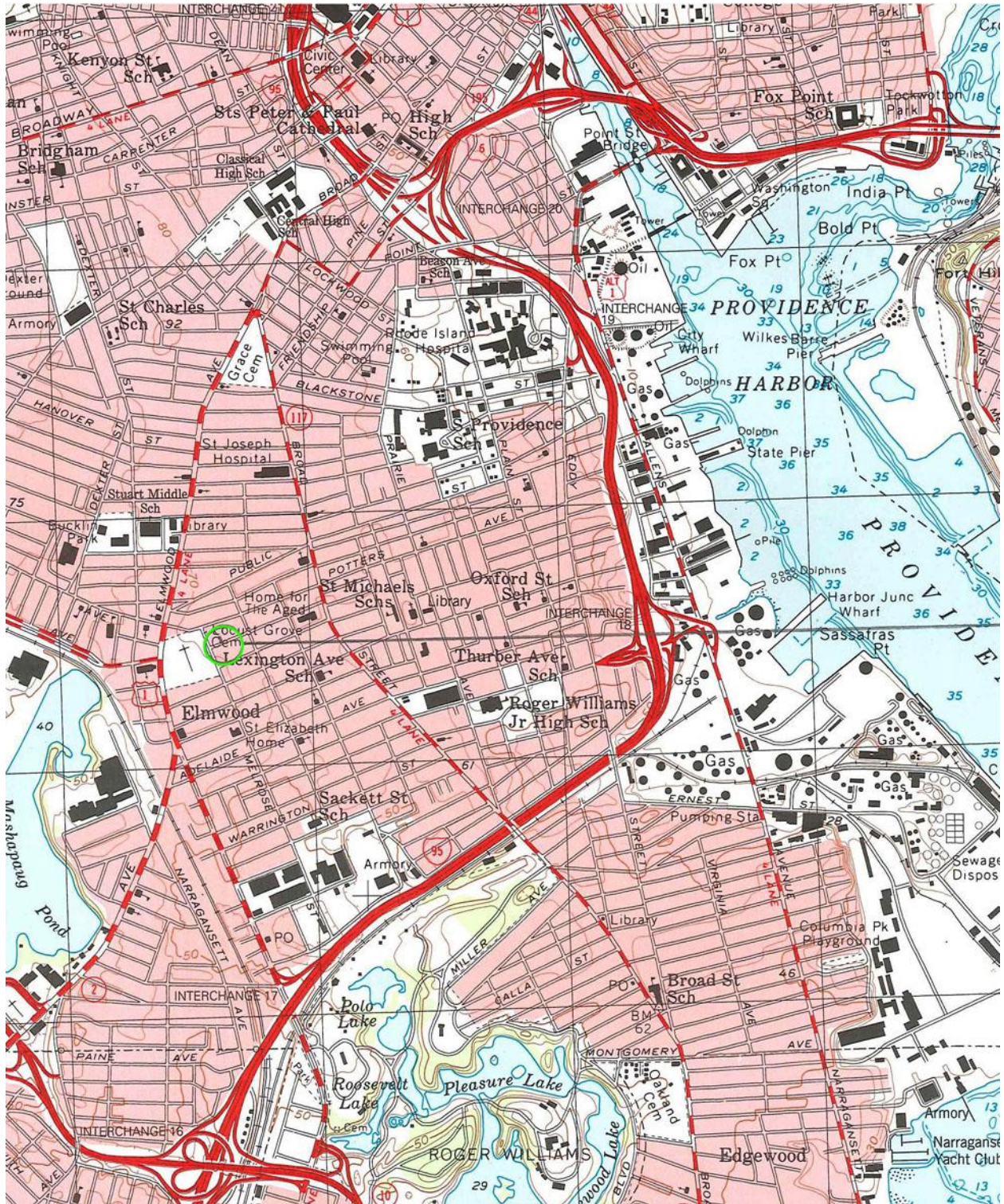
Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.



**Detail from City of Providence Assessor's Map 49**  
William J. Braitsch and Co. Plant occupies lot 353  
(Note that the building noted with a star has been demolished)

William J. Braitsch and Company Plant  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State



William J. Braitsch and Company Plant  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

## Photo Log

Name of Property: William J. Braitsch and Company Plant  
City or Vicinity: Providence  
County: Providence County  
State: Rhode Island  
Name of Photographer: Edward Connors  
Date of Photographs: see list below  
Location of Original Digital Files: RIHPHC, 150 Benefit St., Providence, R.I. 02903

### Photograph #1

North (left) and west (right) elevations, camera facing southeast  
Photograph Date: 13 May 2016

### Photograph #2

East (left) and north (right) elevations, camera facing southwest  
Photograph Date: 30 April 2016

### Photograph #3

West (left) and south (right) elevations, camera facing northeast  
Photograph Date: 30 April 2016

### Photograph #4

North elevation: Colonial Revival entrance with security door, camera facing south  
Photograph Date: 30 April 2016

### Photograph #5

Typical three-grouped window on east elevation, camera facing west  
Photograph Date: 30 April 2016

### Photograph #6

Boiler/Engine House, east elevation, camera facing west  
Photograph Date: 30 April 2016

### Photograph #7

Detail of wood, angled plank door on east elevation of Boiler/Engine House,  
camera facing west  
Photograph Date: 30 April 2016

### Photograph #8

Dry Cleaning House (non-contributing), east (left) and north (right) elevations,  
camera facing southwest  
Photograph Date: 30 April 2016

### Photograph #9

Typical framing showing square-section timber column (column behind is square-  
section timber with steel U-section reinforcement) (first floor), camera facing  
southwest  
Photograph Date: 13 May 2016

William J. Braitsch and Company Plant  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
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Photograph #10

Former office of Colonial Laundry showing Colonial Revival millwork and front door (first floor), camera facing northwest

Photograph Date: 13 May 2016

Photograph #11

Detail of Colonial revival millwork at southwest corner of office, camera facing Southwest

Photograph Date: 13 May 2016

Photograph #12

General view of 2<sup>nd</sup> floor, camera facing south

Photograph Date: 13 May 2016

Photograph #13

General view of 3<sup>rd</sup> floor showing concrete pad for electroplating tanks, camera facing south

Photograph Date: 13 May 2016

Photograph #14

Ironwork in main stairwell at east side of main building, camera facing east

Photograph Date: 13 May 2016

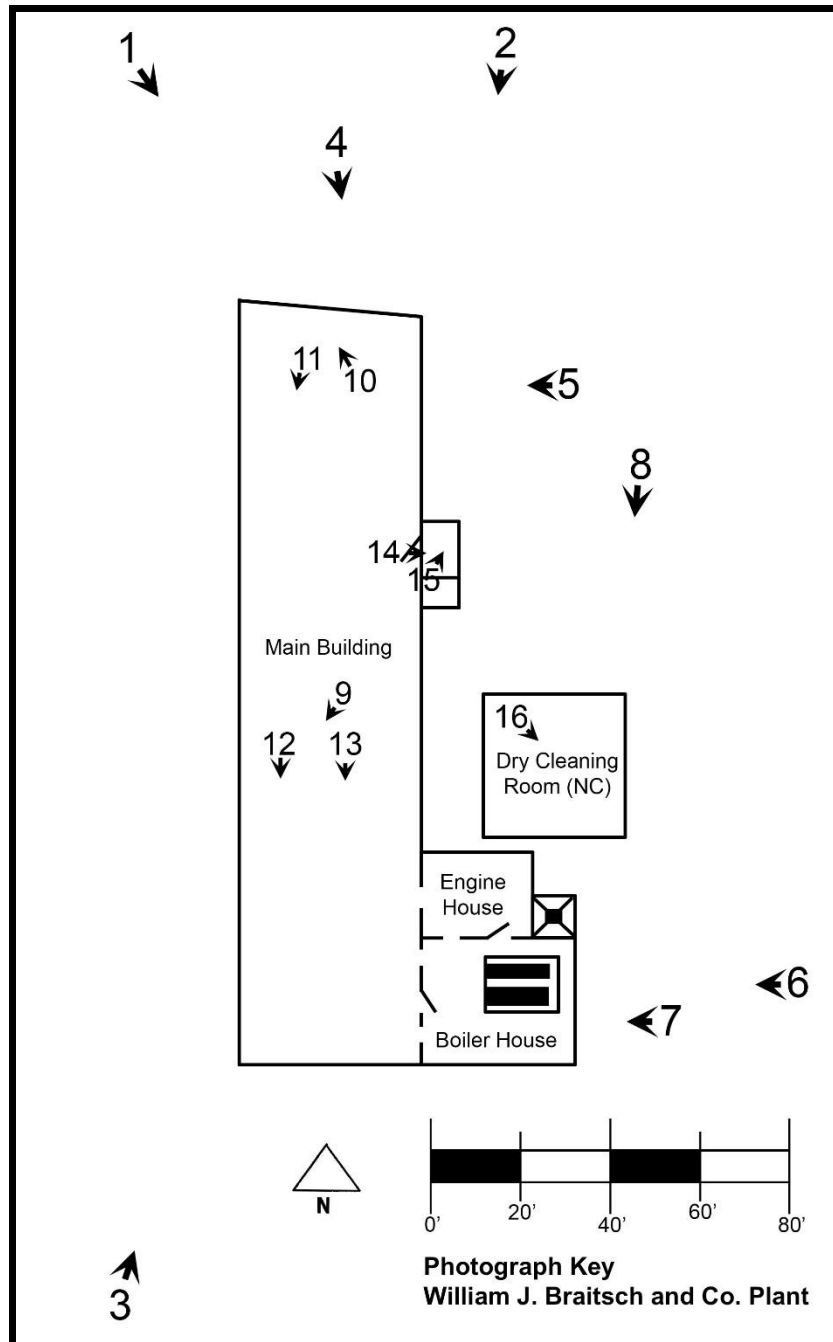
Photograph #15

Jack-arch ceiling in main stairwell, camera facing northeast

Photograph Date: 13 May 2016

William J. Braitsch and Company Plant  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State



**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

William J. Braitsch and Company Plant  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

### Additional Information



**Figure 1**  
Display advertisement for Hearn and Braitsch (1887-1892)  
*Courtesy, William J. Braitsch II*

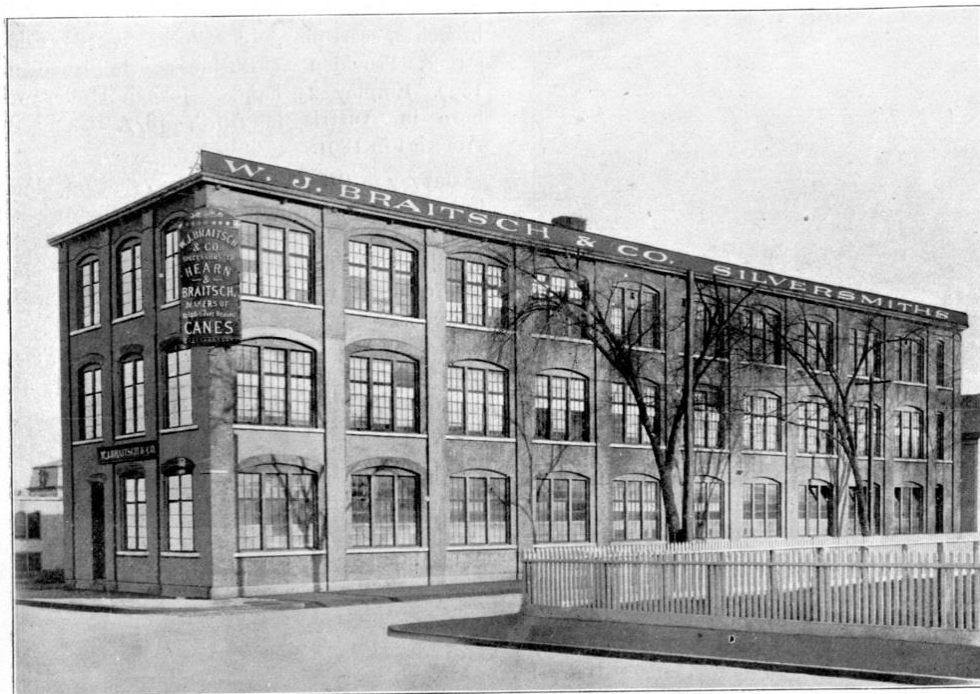
William J. Braitsch and Company Plant  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State



**Figure 2**

Examples of Braitsch silver cane heads (ca. 1895)  
Photographs courtesy of William J. Braitsch, II.



Factory of W. J. Braitsch & Co., 472 Potter's Avenue, Providence.

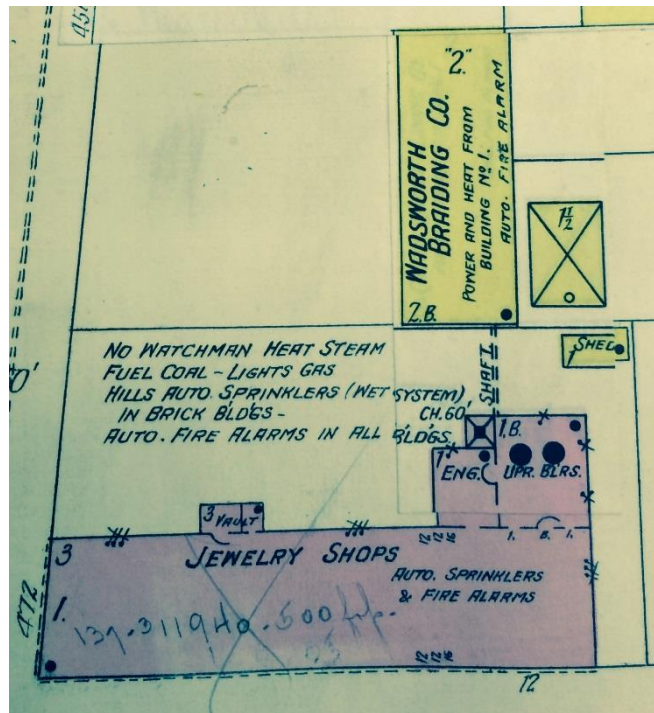
**Figure 3**

Halftone illustration of William J. Braitsch and Co. plant as built 1892  
from *Biographical History of the Manufacturers and Businessmen of Rhode Island* (1901)



William J. Braitsch and Company Plant  
Name of Property

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**Figure 4**

Detail from 1899 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing pasted additions to 1904

*Frame (yellow) building was the first structure on the 1.3-acre property (1891). The surviving brick structure was built in 1892. Note shared power shaft from Braitsch Engine House to Wadsworth Braiding (tenant).*

William J. Braitsch and Company Plant  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
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**Figure 5**

Halftone illustration of Whitten Cycle Manufacturing Co.,  
third floor of 472 Potters Avenue  
*Providence Journal of Commerce* (May 1896)

**Figure 6**

Advertisement for the Whitten Bicycle as manufactured at 472 Potters Avenue  
*Board of Trade Journal* (December 1898)













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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Braitsch, William J. and Company, Plant

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: RHODE ISLAND, Providence

DATE RECEIVED: 5/27/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/12/16  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000443

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 7.11.16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS

HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

Old State House • 150 Benefit Street • Providence, R.I. 02903-1209

TEL (401) 222-2678

FAX (401) 222-2968

TTY / Relay 711

Website [www.preservation.ri.gov](http://www.preservation.ri.gov)

RECEIVED 2280

MAY 27 2016

Nat. Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service

May 24, 2016

Mr. J. Paul Loether, Chief  
National Park Service 2280, 8<sup>th</sup> Floor  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 I (Eye) Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the William J Braitsch & Company Plant at 472 Potters Ave in Providence, Rhode Island, to the National Register of Historic Places

Notification procedures required by law have been followed. The nomination has been reviewed by the Rhode Island Review Board and approved.

Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended in 1980, as State Historic Preservation Officer for Rhode Island, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register of Historic Places.

Sincerely,

Edward F. Sanderson

State Historic Preservation Officer

/mam  
enclosure