

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 89000941

Date Listed: 08/03/89


Honan's Block and
112-114 Main Street
Property Name

Providence
County

RI
State

Woonsocket MRA
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

for 
Signature of the Keeper

8/3/89
Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Statement of significance: Criteria

Criterion A was inadvertently not checked when the nomination form was submitted: Criteria A and C are correct as justified in the text.

This information was confirmed with Pam Kennedy, RISHPO, by telephone.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

941

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National Park Service

JUN 22 1989

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Honan's Block and 112-114 Main Street
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 110-114 Main Street n/a not for publication
city, town Woonsocket n/a vicinity
state Rhode Island code R.I. county Providence code 007 zip code 02895

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	_____ buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	_____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic Resources of Woonsocket, Rhode Island Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Franklin Williamson 13 June 1989
Signature of certifying official Date
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

John R. Searge 8/3/89
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store

COMMERCE/TRADE: professional

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Eastlake

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK

METAL/cast iron

roof OTHER/tar and gravel

other GLASS

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Occupying a corner lot on the northwesterly side of Main Street, Honan's Block and the unnamed block at 112-114 Main Street is a small, two- and three-story, flat- and low-pitch-gable-roofed, brick Late Victorian commercial block. It consists of two visually distinct, but interconnected buildings: Honan's Block (108-110 Main Street), constructed in 1879 in the Eastlake style, and a simpler building, 112-114 Main Street, constructed between 1895 and 1911. The buildings are typical urban commercial structures, sited at the sidewalk edge with an abutting building to the northeast and Ascension Street, a narrow thoroughfare, to the southwest. Honan's Block proper occupies its entire rectangular lot; 112-114 Main Street is an L-plan building which extends across the rear of Honan's Block and abuts its own rear lot line. Demolition of a structure which stood on a separate parcel to the northwest has created a rear service area off Ascension Street. Although Honan's Block proper, with its distinctive cast-iron front, is the more visually striking of the two buildings, their interior spatial linkage, resulting from modifications of 1938/39, requires that they be treated as a single unit for nomination. Together, the two buildings reinforce the continuous vertical line of commercial facades along Main Street immediately southwest of the Harris Block/City Hall (listed in the National Register, 1974).

Honan's Block proper comprises a three-story, rectangular mass fronting on Main Street; the southwest half of a two-story, low-pitch-gable-roofed ell to 112-114 Main Street is attached to the rear (northwest). Narrow, steep Ascension Street rises along the southwest side of the building; its change in grade brings the second floor closer to sidewalk level toward the rear of the structure. The main part of the building follows the standard configuration of a two-part commercial block, with a molded stringcourse separating the first story from the upper floors. This stringcourse is punctuated by a cartouche at the center of the Main Street front. Above the stringcourse, the three-bay, cast-iron facade overlooking Main Street is well preserved. The

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facade is pierced by three large, segmental-arched windows on each floor and is richly articulated with a complex pattern of non-structural, trabeated horizontal and vertical elements embellished with paneling, reeding, and circular bosses. At the top, a frieze contains the ghost of lettering which reads "18 HONAN'S BLOCK 79", surmounted by a deep cornice with console brackets at the ends and panels containing stylized floral designs. Although little paint remains on the ironwork, traces of a possibly polychrome paint scheme are still visible.

The original appearance of the first-floor storefront is not known, although it was undoubtedly of cast iron and typical of late-nineteenth century commercial treatments. The only known historic photograph of the building shows an awning shielding the first floor, also a common practice (Art Work of Rhode Island 1896). The present appearance of the storefront dates from 1938/39. At that time a modern, projecting storefront was installed. Narrow, fluted, aluminum pilasters flank large plate-glass display windows that angle back into the building mass to create a deep, asymmetrical recess to the shop entrance. The display windows are bordered below, and above on the two small Ascension Street windows, with blue Carrara glass panels. The blue color of these panels and blue and white entrance paving tiles inset with script reading "BLUE BIRD" recall the identity of the tenant at the time of renovation: the Blue Bird Hosiery store. A band of pale yellow Carrara glass panels separates the storefront from the original molded stringcourse. This later storefront is in somewhat deteriorated condition. Three of the ten yellow panels are missing, and nearly half of the blue panels are either missing or badly damaged.

The side and rear elevations are of red brick laid in running bond. On Ascension Street (southwest), a molded wood stringcourse above the first story continues the line of the store front. Double rows of sawtooth brickwork surmounted by molded wood trim form the cornice. Four windows with trabeated granite lintels and sills on the first floor have been filled in. The fenestration of the upper stories of the three-story block generally follows a symmetrical pattern, with four bays of regularly spaced windows. Seven of these bays contain segmental-arched windows on the second and third stories. In one bay on the third floor, instead of a segmental-arch window, there is a large, multi-paned rectangular window extending up to the cornice. This window was either part of the original design or

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was added very soon after the building's completion, for documentary sources indicate that a photography studio was located in the building in 1879.

The southwest elevation of the rear ell on Ascension Street originally had six openings symmetrically arranged in three bays. On the first floor, a round-arch door opening, and two flanking segmental openings have been bricked in. The northwesterly opening now contains a rectangular ventilation insert. Three segmental-arch windows are located on the second story. A low roof parapet with metal sheathing constitutes the cornice.

On the northwest, rear, elevation abutting the rear ell and on the northeast, side, elevation abutting 112-114 Main Street, only the third floor of Honan's Block is exposed. These elevations are unornamented, save for a single, small window at the center of the rear (northwest) wall. Segmental-arch openings on the rear of the Honan's Block section of the two-story ell are regularly arranged, consisting of two, at-grade windows on the first story, and a door and window on the second story. The first story windows are boarded over, but the original door and window sash remain above. The third, northeast, bay of this rear wall is blank. The ghost of a former stair which rose from Ascension Street to a landing at the door and then to the cornice is visible. This was an exterior stair attached to a separate structure which stood at 15-17 Ascension Street and was removed within the last twenty years.

Windows throughout Honan's Block are mostly original, with two-over-two, segmental-arched, double-hung windows on the southeast elevation. The rear ell has two-over-one, double-hung, rectangular windows set in segmental openings. The flat roof of the Honan's Block is covered with tar and gravel; a tall, narrow brick chimney rises from the rear of the building's roof.

The Main Street facade (southeast), rear elevation (northwest), and ell end elevation (southwest) on Ascension Street of the unnamed block at 112-114 Main Street are the visible elevations, as it shares party walls with structures to either side. The facade of this two-story, L-plan building retains its original second story treatment consisting of two wide bay windows, surrounded by simple wood and pressed metal trim. The front section of each bay is divided into three single-pane sections; the angled sides have one-over-one sash. The simple cornice

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treatment includes plain rectangular panels below a molded overhang, with sawtooth projections at either end. The appearance of the original storefront is unknown. It has been altered with addition of modern siding materials and new entrance treatments. Elements suggest that it was modified at approximately the same time as Honan's Block, circa 1938/39: fluted aluminum panels and aluminum-and-plate-glass doors and storefronts. The central entrance is in its original location on the facade; the southwest entrance is a later addition, likely also dating from 1938/39. Original storefront elements may exist beneath the later additions. The rear elevation off Ascension Street, comprising the northeast half of the ell, contains a corrugated sheet metal entrance shed and a rectangular, at-grade window opening on the first story and three segmental-arch windows on the second story.

Like the exterior, the interior of Honan's Block proper is essentially unaltered above the first floor. The first floor originally contained a staircase to the second floor along the northeast wall, probably with its own entrance. A separate entrance to the southwest entered the shop. The shop area bears little resemblance to its original appearance, although the original pressed tin ceiling remains above a modern dropped tile ceiling in both the main block and the rear ell, which is reached from the rear of the shops. Other finishes may also be present beneath later paneling.

The second and third floor plans are nearly identical, with a U-shaped arrangement of rooms on the southeast, southwest, and northwest around a stairhall located in the northeast central area. The original stair connecting the second and third floors is still in place. On the second floor, replacement floor boards indicate where the stair rose under the existing stair from the first floor below. Immediately to the northwest, a portion of the hall party wall between Honan's Block and 112-114 Main Street was removed to join the second floors of the two buildings. The upper floors of Honan's Block are now reached by a first floor stair against the southwest wall of 112-114 Main Street. The rear ell is reached from a door opening near the center of the rear wall.

Original interior finishes include two-inch pine floor boards, plaster walls, and decorative pressed-tin ceilings. Original wood trim remains throughout including the turned balusters and

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newels of the staircase, four-panel doors, two-panel doors with upper glass insets, molded door and window surrounds, chairrails, and mopboards. Original door hardware consisting of pin hinges and glass-and-brass door handles is also in place, as are ornamented cast-iron radiators.

The building's high ceilings, large windows, and transom panels above interior doors maximize natural light. One of the most interesting aspects of the design is the third floor, which appears to have been built specifically to house a photography studio. The stairhall leads into the front, or east, office overlooking Main Street. This in turn leads into the south room which appears to have functioned as the studio. Here, the immense floor-to-ceiling window which extends into a skylight (now covered over) and southern exposure create an extremely well-lit work space. A small room at the northwest corner of the building now used as a bathroom functioned as the darkroom. Black wall paint and scars of counters and shelving remain, as does a small, eye-height pass-through door into the stairhall. The door may have been used to receive exposed plates for processing or to communicate with customers approaching the main office door.

The first floor interior of 112-114 Main Street originally comprised two shops separated by a central stair. It is now a single room which retains segments of decorative pressed-tin finishes on both the ceiling and upper walls. Parallel cornices visible in the center indicate the location of the original central stair shaft. Original interior wood doors also remain at the rear connecting to the rear ell which is now a restaurant kitchen. On the second floor, the central stair shaft is boarded over at floor level; however, turned newel posts embedded in the plaster walls remain. This area now appears as a deep, rectangular alcove off the main hall. A later stair, installed when the original stair was removed, rises against the southwest wall shared with Honan's Block proper. The two buildings are connected via the hall at the top of these stairs.

Flanking the central hall are two rooms, still essentially unchanged, although a portion of the southwestern room has been taken for the new stair. Interior finishes include wood floors, pressed tin ceilings, plaster walls, original wood doors with glass upper panels and hardware, and original molded door and

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window surrounds. A small light shaft topped with a rectangular, peaked skylight is located adjacent to a lavatory towards the rear center of the building mass.

The rear ell space on the second floor extending across the back of 112-114 Main Street and Honan's Block retains plastered exterior walls. Ceilings and interior partition walls have been removed revealing the low-pitched-gable roof framing and segments of the brick exterior walls. The roof is supported on plain iron columns.

Honan's Block and the unnamed block at 112-114 Main Street possess excellent exterior and interior architectural integrity above the first floor. The 1938/39 modifications to the first floor storefronts and associated first floor, interior stair and circulation changes are typical of the updating which has occurred to numerous downtown commercial buildings in many communities. Installation of the 1938/39 storefront in Honan's Block appears to have eliminated any physical remains of the original storefront. Alterations to 112-114 Main Street may not have removed all traces of the original treatment. These changes are of interest in documenting the history of the two buildings; however, the Honan's Block storefront has been compromised by loss and damage of its fabric. Despite these changes, the overall integrity of the buildings' original design and architectural character is reasonably intact, conveying a sense of Woonsocket's commercial Main Street in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1879

Significant Dates

1879

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Honan's Block and 112-114 Main Street are representative examples of urban commercial architecture reflecting Woonsocket's evolution and growth as a regional business center concurrent with its emergence as a prosperous industrial community. This complex is architecturally notable for its fine late nineteenth-century cast-iron facade, the only surviving example of this mode of expression in the city. It is also of interest for elements that appear to indicate that the third floor was very early altered, if not originally designed, for use as a photography studio. Evidence of adaptation to early-twentieth-century concepts of modern storefront design is of secondary interest.

First settled in the late seventeenth century, Woonsocket developed as a collection of small mill hamlets and by the mid-nineteenth century grew to be a major textile manufacturing center. Mills were located along the Blackstone River, which flows in a broad W-configuration through the city. Main Street evolved along a ridge terrace north and west of the river. During the second half of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, as prosperity continued, the initial one- to two-story wood-frame buildings of the linear downtown were gradually replaced with wood and masonry blocks of two- to five-stories. Woonsocket's industrial economic base was greatly undermined during the Great Depression years of the 1930s, and urban renewal of the 1960s shifted some of the commercial focus away from Main Street.

William J. and Nancy Honan of Cumberland purchased the lot and a standing building at the corner of Ascension and Main Streets from Elijah B. Newell in 1857. Honan's occupation is not known, but the Main Street property appears to have been an investment property rented to commercial tenants. On May 21, 1879, Honan obtained a mortgage of \$6,200 from the Producer's Savings Bank

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of property less than one

UTM References

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4	6	5	2	8	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property occupies Woonsocket City Plat 14-U, lot 126 and lot 127.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire City lots that have historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia A. Fitch, Architectural Historian

organization The Public Archaeology Lab., Inc. date April, 1989

street & number 387 Lonsdale Avenue telephone 401-728-8780

city or town Pawtucket state Rhode Island zip code 02860

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for a building to be erected on Main Street. Honan may never have seen the completed building, as he died intestate sometime before September 1, 1879, when Nancy Honan signed lease agreements with several tenants.

The Honan Block property was sold by William J. Honan (junior) and Annie Honan in 1896 and passed through three owners until 1938 when it was purchased by Joseph C. and Ida C. Falk. At that time, the Falks had already owned the adjacent L-plan building to northwest and northeast (112-114 Main Street) for ten years. Their ownership of numerous properties in the city makes the task of tracing earlier deeds for 112-114 Main Street difficult. The Falk family retained ownership of both buildings until 1987. Under their ownership the storefronts of both Honan's Block and 112-114 Main Street were modernized and a new combined internal circulation system created. Woonsocket City Directories document that these changes occurred to Honan's Block in 1938/39. The removal of an original stair in both buildings and installation of a single, shared stair in 112-114 Main Street strongly suggests that both were reworked concurrently.

A variety of similar types of retail and professional tenants essential to the vitality of any downtown have occupied Honan's Block and 112-114 Main Street over the last ninety years. Among the first tenants of Honan's Block were Frank C. Birtles, a photographer, Adolph Weiskopf, who had a hat shop on the first floor, and Edward Mee, who operated a saloon in the basement. Later occupants of both buildings included photographers, shoe stores, a doctor, a barber, a dress maker, clothing stores, a jeweler, and a beauty shop. Woonsocket Trust Bank owned and occupied Honan's Block in the 1920s.

The third floor of Honan's Block was occupied by a photography studio from 1879 to at least 1915 and possibly until 1938. Frank C. Birtles had his business in Honan's Block from 1879 to 1892; George Bousquet from 1893 to 1916; and John Tenczar from 1917 until 1938 when he moved next door to 112 Main Street. Generally considered to have been invented in 1839, photography was a well-established profession at the time Honan's Block was constructed. In fact, Frank C. Birtles had previously been in business at another location on Main Street, and the Woonsocket City Directory for 1875 lists four other photographers working in the city. Portraits, views, and lawn parties were among Birtles specialties.

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The distinctive and unaltered elements of the Honan's Block studio space exist as a valuable record of the technological requirements of commercial photography in the late 1870s. At that time photography techniques relied primarily on the "wet plate" negative process and on the sun for plate exposure. Dry glass plate negatives first appeared in the early 1870s, but did not immediately become widely used; wet plate negatives required that the darkroom processing be completed promptly following exposure. Although several forms of artificial light for indoor shooting were available, the sun was the quickest and most economical light source. In this period prior to George Eastman's development of a practical roll film system (1884) and the kodak camera (1888) which introduced amateurs to photography, professional photography was at its zenith. Although the subject has not yet been systematically studied, it seems that nineteenth-century commercial photographers preferred to occupy either first floor studios in order to capitalize on walk-in business, or top floor spaces to take advantage of natural light. The location of the Honan's Block studio on an upper floor reflects the latter tendency.

Honan's Block is architecturally significant as a local example of Late Victorian full-cast-iron-facade commercial design. Appearing in Providence as early as 1858, and reaching greatest popularity in the 1870s, cast-iron-facade buildings remained small in number across Rhode Island. Perhaps fewer than a dozen were built in Providence, and in other, smaller downtown areas around the state only one or two were erected. While cast-iron trim was included in several Woonsocket commercial blocks, such as the Farrington Block, 32-34 Main Street (1868), and the Hope Block, 237-245 Main Street (ca. 1868), no other examples of this relatively rare building type are known to have been built in the city. With its handsome, sculptural Eastlake ornamentation, Honan's Block stands as a fairly late, but important local example of cast iron technology expressed in late-nineteenth century commercial building form.

The unnamed block at 112-114 Main Street stands as a counterpoint to Honan's Block, and as a good representative example of modestly scaled and conceived late-nineteenth century commercial design. It too maximizes natural light sources through the use of broad bay windows and, in its simple, pressed-metal cornice, echoes the highly decorative cast iron facade of Honan's Block. The 1938/39 alterations to the storefronts, first floor shops,

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and, staircases provide an interesting record of shifting concepts of commercial design, but are of secondary importance to the complex's primary significance as a Late Victorian commercial block that reflects Woonsocket's business and industrial prosperity at the end of the nineteenth century.

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