

PH0690503

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED **MAR 12 1976**
DATE ENTERED **OCT 22 1976**

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 *nh* Rhode Island Hospital Trust Building
AND/OR COMMON Hospital Trust Building

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 15 Westminster Street
CITY, TOWN Providence VICINITY OF 2 Rep. Edward Beard
STATE Rhode Island 02903 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 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"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" 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 Rhode Island Hospital Trust National Bank
STREET & NUMBER 1 Hospital Trust Plaza
CITY, TOWN Providence VICINITY OF Rhode Island, 02903

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Providence City Hall
STREET & NUMBER Dorrance Street at Washington Street
CITY, TOWN Providence STATE Rhode Island, 02903

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Interface: Providence
DATE 1974-1975 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Interface: Providence
CITY, TOWN Providence STATE Rhode Island

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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

What is now called the "old" Hospital Trust Building is an eleven-story steel-framed banking and office structure, faced in limestone above a low marble sidewalk-base. It is of U-shape, except where ground and second floors fill in the site area completely on its east side. It was planned and completed in 1917-1919 from the designs of York & Sawyer of New York and reflects the tastes of that firm and of its time as to what an important bank building should be: a dignified and suave adaptation of the Italian palazzi of the High Renaissance -- necessarily much stretched vertically, of course.

The ground floor has walls of smooth, finely-set ashlar punctuated by Corinthian pilasters, between which are tall, many-paned round-headed windows, except where there are imposing portals with gilt bronze doors having panels in relief, at north, east and west. Above and around this street-level palace formula runs a modest entablature, with an "attic" above it in the low eastern in-filled portion of the "U". A second modest cornice treatment surrounds the building above this attic level. The structure is smooth-faced for the next seven stories of its height, up to a slightly-projected belt-course. Above this belt are the two top stories with their bays separated by Tuscan pilasters supporting a full and prominent entablature which is crowned by a balustrade. As the building is, on the east, set back on a deep area of pavement and canal, it is best seen from this side; and here was placed the prominent and ostensible main entrance to the bank -- even though much use has always been made of the lateral (north and south) entrances to the elevator-lobby.

Internally, the most important decorative treatment was reserved for those areas which were both most noticeable to those frequenting the building and most prestigious in their use: the entrance-or elevator-lobby with its north and south vestibules and portals, and the eastern entrance into the banking-hall; the banking-hall itself which takes up all the ground-floor space beside the long transverse entrance passage; the safe-deposit facilities below ground; the directors' meeting-room on an upper floor; and the trust department in a later (1928) western extension on the ground floor. These were the places intended to show the full resources and dignity of the bank, and intentions were well fulfilled. The upper stories were for departments of the bank not generally visited by its patrons and for rented office space, whose internal decor was left to the lessees.

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In 1974, the trust department vanished from the ground floor -- a walkway and lobbies to the new Hospital Trust Tower building to the west taking its place -- and the directors' meeting-room was removed to an upper floor of the Tower. The elevator-lobby and the great banking-hall, however, remain -- the first unchanged and the latter undergoing sympathetic renovation for new uses by the bank; the safe-deposit department remains unchanged.

(See Continuation Sheet 1)

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The elevator-lobby is long and relatively narrow, though by necessity spacious. It is of two-story height and is for seven bays barrel-vaulted, excepting the separate glassed vestibules at the ends, which have flat ceilings. Paved in marble, it has also a rusticated wainscot of this material, in beige, about eight feet high. The walls above are plastered and divided into bays by Corinthian pilasters which flank shallow, round-headed wall recesses on the west (echoing large round-headed windows to the banking-hall on the east) and which support an entablature which has swags in its frieze. The bronze and glass doors to the north and south vestibules, and those on the cross-axis from the banking-room, are set in beige marble architraves surmounted by flat classical entablatures. However, the chief visual adornments of this area are its beautiful vaulted and compartmented ceiling decorated in blue, green and gold, and the finely-executed doors to the nine original elevators which are of pierced gilt bronze and incorporate panels showing cherubs, griffons and foliage. Five large bronze hanging lanterns -- two in the vestibules, three in the inner lobby -- are handsome accessories. This elegant public passageway has remained largely unchanged in appearance since 1919.

The large former banking-hall (about 180 feet long, 114 feet deep, and 50 feet high from floor to the top of its central barrel-vault) takes up the entire eastern stretch of the building. This monumental room could be described as an Italian High Renaissance salone of great proportions and fine ornament -- one thinks, as perhaps York & Sawyer did, of the Palazzo Colonna in Rome -- or, because of its plan, even as a basilica of that period. In its main portion it is eleven generous bays long (north to south) by five bays in depth. Its business accommodations are increased by a range of low and inconspicuous ground-floor offices, with some in the galleries above along the east side, but these ancillaries do not detract from the main design. The walls of this banking-hall are of pale rosy-tinted plaster scored to resemble closely-jointed ashlar and are punctuated either by large, round-headed, many-paned tall windows or by blind recessed arches. Within these walls the room is divided into various areas by its ranges of colossal Corinthian columns of tawny marble on slightly-raised octagonal bases. Set out from the outer walls, these give the "basilican plan:" ten columns run from north to south on either side of the large middle area, leaving what might be called "side aisles." At the north and south ends of the room two columns are spaced between the end ones of the mentioned ten (see sketch-plan included in this nomination), allowing five end bays to contain business and official spaces: these and the "side aisles" have flat coffered ceilings picked out in colour --

(See Continuation Sheet 2)

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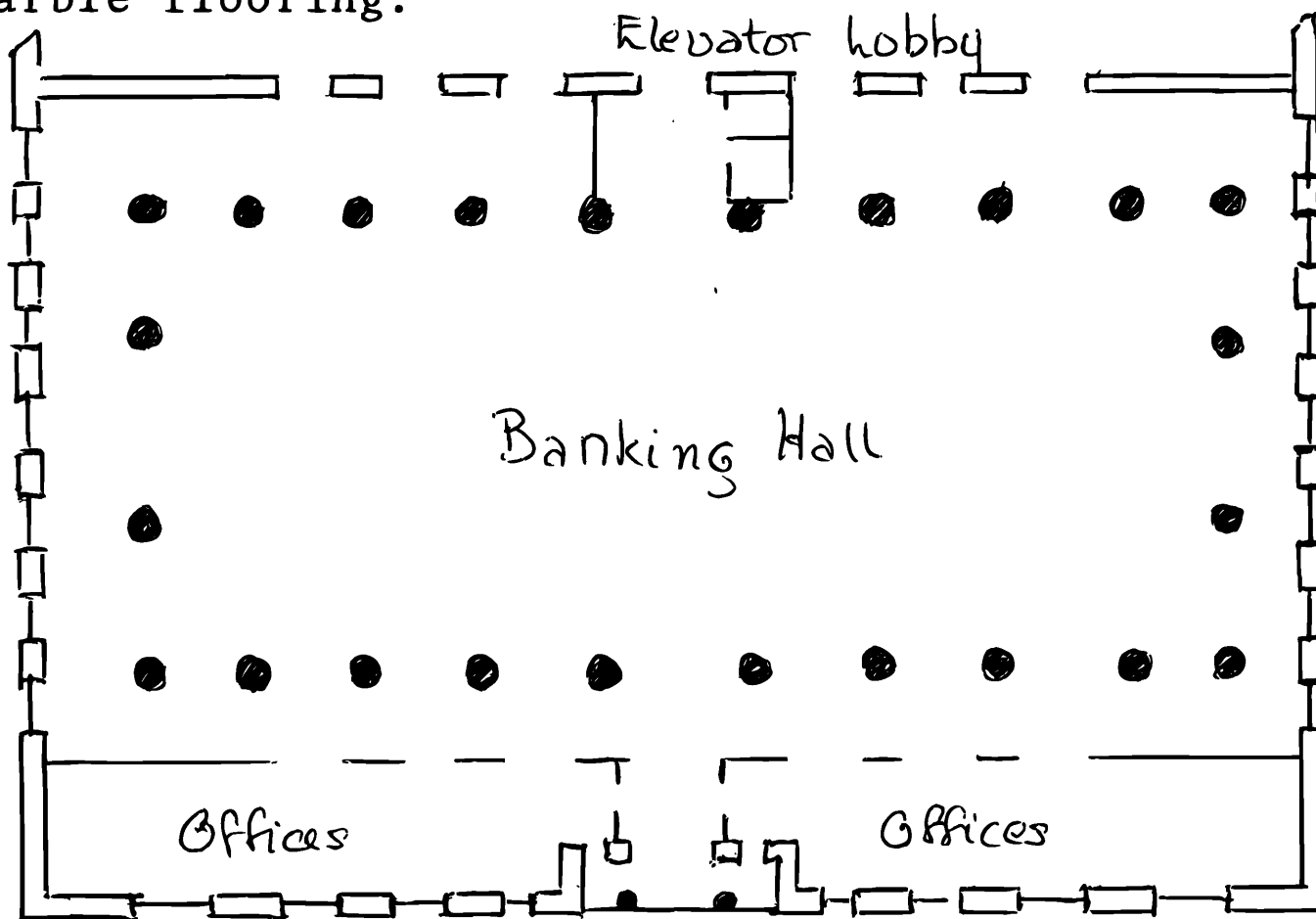
7

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and medallions in the frieze. The principal open area of the banking-hall, contained within the ranges of columns, has a barrel-vaulted ceiling ended by solid lunettes, and this very high ceiling is compartmented and tinted, with gilt bosses in the compartments. Between columns and ceiling is a full and elaborate entablature treatment featuring modillions, dentils, and egg-and-dart moulding, rosettes in the frieze etc. From this ceiling in the central, column enframed area depend two large bronze chandeliers of annular form and a large four-faced globular clock of bronze and enamel (the information-desk being formerly directly below it); there are also smaller bronze, armed, chandeliers in the west "aisle." Flooring is of grey, grey-green and white marble brought for the purpose from Italy, Greece, Belgium, and Knoxville, Tennessee, and laid in large square and octagonal patterns.

Since removal of banking functions to the new tower building, the large banking-hall just described is undergoing refurbishment and floor-level re-planning for new office uses. The handsome marble and bronze tellers' cages, writing-desks, benches etc. have been removed. Around the periphery of the banking-hall unobtrusive low room dividers of black-painted metal and smoked glass have been installed. Slightly-raised carpeted flooring sections have been set in the four quadrants of the room, carefully spaced to reveal patterned pathways of the original marble flooring.



Sketch-plan (not to scale) after removal of tellers' cages, railings, counters and other sub-divisions in the summer of 1974.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Though now joined and subordinate to a very tall glass office tower to which many banking functions and offices have been transferred, the "old" Hospital Trust Building has not been overshadowed in quality and interest by its neighbor. It retains externally the elegance and dignity it has always possessed and is still impressive when viewed from across the open space to its east, still in consonance with the pal-azzo-like Federal Building to its north and the Turk's Head and AMICA Buildings to its south. The new tower, in fact, forms a western back-drop for it rather than devouring it.

In the first three decades of the XX Century there were special qualities which certain types of large buildings were meant to express, and these varied in architectural shape, style and adornment according to their usage -- whether for government, church, theatre, banking and commerce, hotel, club, apartment-house. For banks, dignity and solid-ity without extravagance was a general rule; and the Hospital Trust Building follows it, as did most of the work of York & Sawyer, who specialized in bank, educational, and government buildings. York & Sawyer seem to have been singularly adept at creating designs in keep- ing with the type of operation to be housed and with the local ambience and surrounding architecture (as they did in the case of the much smaller but equally handsome Washington Trust Company Building in West- erly, Rhode Island, already included in the National Register's Wilcox Park Historic District).

For anyone entering the Hospital Trust Building, whether for banking or simply to reach an upstairs office, the elevator lobby or arcade is still a visual treat to those who take the time to look at it. The great beauty of proportion and ornament of the former banking- hall has already been mentioned and remains appreciated by both the bank and its patrons.

Characteristic modern structural methods, were used in construc- ting the Hospital Trust Building. These included pile foundations with steel and concrete footings driven many feet below the waterline of the Providence River, contiguous on the east; the so-called "fireproof" construction of steel frame with stone facing; and an

(See Continuous Sheet 3)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Cady, John Hutchins: The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence, 1636-1950 (Providence, Rhode Island, 1957), p. 227.
 Geerlings, Gerald K.: Metal Crafts in Architecture ... (New York, 1957), pp. 76, 87, 92.
 Rhode Island Hospital Trust Company: The Netopian (Providence, Rhode Island), Various issues, 1920.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

830
990

A	1 9	2 9 9 9 9 0	4 6 3 2 9 4 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

Richard B. Harrington, Consultant

ORGANIZATION

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

DATE

July 16, 1974

STREET & NUMBER

150 Benefit Street

TELEPHONE

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 X

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 National Park Service

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Frederick R. Williams

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

March 2, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Raymond J. ...

DATE

10/22/76

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

10/20/76

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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elaborate ventilating system, which drew in fresh air from the roof of the building, filtered it through a spray chamber to remove dust, dried it chemically, and sent it through the heating stack. This was believed at the time (The Netopian, April, 1920) "to be the most complete and efficient (system) that science has achieved."

While the building nominated is a fine architectural work of the twentieth century, the institution which it will continue partially to house is worthy of mention as a mid-nineteenth creation of substantial importance locally. In the early 1860's the need was recognized to establish a properly-staffed, large hospital to serve Providence and its environs. This matter was taken up with interest by prosperous citizens ready to donate sizeable sums to such a cause as well as by many others willing to subscribe smaller ones towards this purpose. The Rhode Island Hospital, as a foundation, was chartered in 1863: plans for its erection continued, though delayed by the Civil War, and were finally achieved, in a towered, Ruskinian Gothic style structure in 1868. During these five years the need for proper management and for the increase of funds on hand became apparent.

Thus, in 1867, the Rhode Island Hospital Trust Company was organized for this purpose. Its chief function, in its first small quarters, was to oversee the hospital's finances; but it gradually began to take on commercial banking functions as a way to aid the hospital-- and to invite citizen depositors and shareholders. From its quiet beginnings managing a philanthropic enterprise in rented rooms on South Main Street, the Hospital Trust Company expanded its activities and services to the point of building, in 1889-1891, a Romanesque building of six stories at 15 Westminster Street, superseded on the same site by the later building, of 1917, since it was in the heart of what for generations had been a center of Providence's commercial life. To quote an article in the June, 1920, issue of The Netopian, published by the Hospital Trust Bank, "the same condition that made Washington Row and lower Westminster Street once the heart of the City's retail trade district make them now the ideal location for a banking and office building." One of the major banks in Rhode Island, this large organization, now known as the Rhode Island Hospital Trust National Bank, still faithfully fulfills its obligations to its major stockholder, the state's first medical facility from which it takes its name.

(See Continuation Sheet 4)

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No matter what other buildings go up or come down in Providence's inner city, the "old" Hospital Trust Building stays on to fill its strategic visual location with quiet dignity and to provide a delightful surprise to those who enter it. While justifiably proud of their great new adjoining tower, the bank's administrators still have pride and affection for their older quarters and are maintaining them well. Their just-completed renovation has been sympathetic to the original fabric and unobtrusive in its modern additions. Providence's downtown area has suffered greatly in recent decades from demolition, alteration, and neglect. Now there are plans and energy for preservation and rehabilitation. The Hospital Trust Building is an important introduction to the eastern part of this area both as a visual landmark and as an example of the successful renovation for continuing use of a major commercial building.

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Withey, Henry F., and Withey, Elsie Rathburn: Biographical Dictionary
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pp. 536-537, 635-636.