

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

..... Name of Property
..... County and State
..... Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number _____ Page 1

Supplementary Listing Record

NRIS Reference Number: SG100002194

Date Listed: 3/12/2018

Property Name: L'Union Saint Jean-Baptist d' Amerique

County: Providence

State: RI

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


Signature of the Keeper

3/12/2018
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Significant Dates:

The date 1979 is deleted from Significant Dates. [All significant dates must be within the stated period of significance.]

The RHODE ISLAND SHPO was notified of this amendment.

DISTRIBUTION:

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

56-2194

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 National 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: L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique

Other names/site number: N/A

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: 1 Social Street

City or town: Woonsocket State: RI 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Not For Publication: Vicinity: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 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

<hr/>	
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>[Signature]</u>	<u>1/19/2018</u>
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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

<hr/>	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
<hr/>	
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:)


Signature of the Keeper

3/12/2018
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>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<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.)

SOCIAL/meeting hall, clubhouse

COMMERCE/specialty store

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION/school

COMMERCE/business

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Classical Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Walls: BRICK, STONE/Limestone, METAL/Aluminum; Foundation: CONCRETE; Roof: SYNTHETICS/Rubber

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.)

Summary Paragraph

The former L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique (USJB) building, constructed in 1926, is a roughly L-shaped, four-story, brick Classical Revival-style building with a symmetrical limestone facade. It is located at 1 Social Street in downtown Woonsocket, RI on a large lot at the south corner of Social and Worrall streets within Monument Square, a triangular intersection of Blackstone, Social, and Main Streets with a Civil War monument set in the center. The building is within a commercial area densely developed with two- to four-story masonry buildings constructed in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The building occupies the northwestern third of its northwest-southeast-oriented, rectangular lot, and two-thirds of the parcel is a paved parking lot. The building is set flush against the east sidewalk. The USJB building contributes to a streetscape of multi-story commercial and civic buildings that date from the late nineteenth to mid-to-late twentieth centuries.

The USJB building retains integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. On the exterior, the west facade is intact on the second through fourth floors, including Indiana limestone pilasters, engaged columns, sculptural relief panels with decorative motifs, and a decorative cornice with dentils, modillions, Greek keys, swags, and a wrought-iron balustrade. The building's exterior

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was altered in 1975: major changes included a re-orientation of the primary entrance from the facade to the north elevation, alteration of the facade's first story storefronts with construction of a wood-frame system that now covers the original stamped sheet metal surrounds and multi-pane transoms, and installation of a metal grill system on the plain brick walls of the north and east elevations. However, the original design and materials are intact on all elevations beneath the 1975 alterations. Plans are underway to determine the best method to restore the original features of the storefront and remove the metal grill system from the building.

The original layout of the interior floors is intact, with some alterations to accommodate the building's current uses as a charter school and professional office space. Each floor has a central, double-loaded corridor that runs north-south with offices or classrooms in varying sizes on the east and west sides. The first floor has new vinyl tile floors, ramps, and interior partition walls and are now ADA-compliant classrooms. The third floor has modern low-pile carpeting and interior partitions added for use as a school. The first-floor lobby and the second and fourth floors retain the majority of their original materials; modern low-pile carpeting and interior partitions have been added to some offices and some interior partitions. The overall condition of the building is good.

Narrative Description

Exterior

The USJB building is a roughly L-shaped, four-story, eight-bay-by-two-bay, brick building designed in the Classical Revival style (Photos 1 and 2). The building has a flat roof surfaced with rubber membrane, brick walls, a limestone facade, and rests on a concrete foundation.

The symmetrical, west-facing facade is the most elaborate elevation of the building.¹ It is clad with Indiana limestone and vertically divided on the second through fourth stories by five engaged columns flanked by two pilasters, all of which are fluted with Corinthian capitals (Photo 3). A deep, projecting overhang with modillions and dentils and a wide limestone cornice runs the width of the facade. It is inscribed with "L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique" in the center and has swags and a Greek key motif above the north and south end bays (Photo 4). The facade is further divided horizontally with recessed, limestone panels embellished with simple, geometric relief sculptures between the third and fourth stories and central vases of fruit flanked by swags in relief above the second story. Beneath the second story windows, an original wrought-iron balustrade runs along the base of the engaged columns and pilasters. The original, decorative, stamped sheet-metal storefront on the first story of the facade is intact, but it is presently encased within a wood-frame surround coated with pea stone installed in 1975. Primary entrances on the facade are slightly recessed in the north and south end bays of the first-story at street-level and consist of round-arch entrances with modern double-leaf, steel frame, fully glazed doors with round-arch, steel frame transoms and an original decorative limestone keystone. Additional entrances are located in the third and sixth bays; the other street level bays are filled with storefront windows. These doors and windows were replaced in 1975 with steel frame, tempered plate glass sash and double-leaf, fully glazed doors within the original openings. The storefront doors are inaccessible, due to the conversion of the first floor to a school in 2015. The fenestration pattern is unaltered on the upper stories of the facade. Windows have simple rectangular, slightly projecting sills and are set in pairs in the central six bays and singularly in the north and south bays above the entrance bays.

¹ The building sits askew of primary cardinal directions on the lot, facing northwest. For the purposes of this document, the directions have been adjusted so that the northwest elevation will be referred to as the west elevation and each elevation will follow suit.

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The north and east elevations are unornamented brick walls with punched window openings, now partially covered with the suspended metal grill system installed in 1975 over the second through fourth stories (Photo 5). Portions of the metal grill system have been removed to expose existing windows on the two elevations (Photo 6). The remainder of the north and east elevations are stucco over brick and painted white. In 1975, when the exterior of the building was remodeled, the primary entrance to the building was moved to the north elevation, which previously shared a partial party wall with an adjacent building that was demolished between 1961 and 1963 (see Photo 5). The entrance consists of steel frame, fully glazed double-leaf doors with full-height steel frame sidelights and transoms covered by a flat-roof entrance portico. The portico is clad with plywood panels coated in pea stone, supported by square masonry columns sheathed in corrugated tiles. A one-story loading bay and storage area extends across the east elevation and is sheathed in stucco and plywood panels coated in pea stone. In 1975, a small garage-bay addition was constructed at the north end of the loading bay. The south elevation shares a partial party wall with the adjacent building at 325 Main Street, and where it is separated from the abutting building, is unpainted brick.

The fenestration pattern throughout the building, except the first story of the facade and north elevation, is unaltered. Windows throughout the building are primarily original single-light, double-hung and casement metal sash, set individually and in pairs (Photos 7 and 8). The windows on the brick faced elevations have simple, rectangular cast concrete sills and lintels. Windows on the third story in the northeast corner of the building consist of multi-light, casement wood sash, which denotes the interior room's original use as the Mallet Library. Windows on the fourth story in the northeast corner of the building consist of large, multi-light, casement windows with round arch transoms in the Bureau General meeting room that are not visible on the exterior of the building due to the metal grill system.

Interior

The USJB building contains a basement level with utility spaces and four floors of offices, classrooms, and communal spaces. The first through third floors have similar original plans, with modifications as discussed below. Each has a central, double-loaded corridor that runs north-south with rooms in varying sizes on the east and west sides of the building. Ca. 2015, alterations were made on the first and third floors to accommodate the needs of two charter school tenants. The historic layout and finishes of the second floor remain mostly intact. The fourth floor was used solely by the USJB and is unaltered. The north half of the fourth floor consists of a central, double-loaded corridor that runs north-south with offices to the east and west, and the south half of the floor includes an elaborate lobby and "Bureau General" meeting room.

Two stair halls in the northwest and southwest areas of the building accessed by the west and north entrance lobbies connect the first through fourth floors (Photos 9-10). Each has a cast iron staircase and balustrade with wood handrails, marble treads, and terrazzo landings. The main staircase on the south side of the building has marble wainscoting and a semi-circular landing between the first and second stories. The stairwell from the first floor to basement, at the west side of the lobby, has a semi-circular landing with cast iron balustrade, wood railings, and marble treads. The staircase on the north side of the building is more restrained in design than the main staircase to the south, consisting of a rectangular plan. An original passenger elevator is located in the south end of the building, accessed by the main lobby, and a freight elevator is in the northeast corner of the building. Original fireproof vault rooms for files are located in the east end of the basement, in the north end of the third floor, and in the central area of the fourth floors (Photo 11).

The walls throughout the building are plaster, some with natural and painted wood chair rails and wide baseboards. Most of the original plaster ceilings and cornice trim are covered with suspended acoustic tiles

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on the first three floors and parts of the fourth floor. Original windows with simple painted or stained wood trim remain intact throughout the interior spaces. Original stained or painted wood doors with brass hardware and stained or painted wood trim remain intact primarily on the second and fourth floors. Replacement metal doors with simple bands of metal trim are throughout the first-floor school spaces and replacement, paneled, painted wood doors with a mix of original stained wood and replacement painted wood trim are throughout the third-floor school spaces. Additional interior partition walls were erected to create classrooms and administration offices on the first and third floors. Vinyl tile was installed on the first floor, and low pile commercial carpeting was installed on the second, third, and parts of the fourth floors. Despite minor alterations to the floor plan and some finishes, the building retains well-preserved primary spaces consisting of the main lobby, staircases, the second-floor offices, third floor Mallet Library, and the entire fourth floor.

The basement level is divided into utility spaces on the south side of the main corridor and has the original cafeteria, now a multi-purpose room for the school, with vinyl tile flooring, suspended acoustic tile ceiling, and plaster walls (Photo 12) on the north side. The utility spaces, including the boiler and electrical rooms, have poured concrete floors and painted brick or concrete walls.

The first floor originally consisted of four, commercial spaces with corresponding basement storage spaces accessed by staircases between the two levels. The store spaces were altered during the 1975 renovations to the building. Multi-pane storefront transoms are intact beneath the wood-frame overlay on the facade. The 1975 replacement, metal and plate glass storefront doors and transoms remain intact and visible on the interior, although they are no longer operable and have ca. 2015 frosted glass panels overlaid on the interior to obscure view of the schools' interior spaces from the exterior. An ADA accessible ramp was constructed in the main hall on the first floor and doors were installed in the stair halls for fire code compliance. The most intact interior space on the first floor is the main lobby at the southwest end of the building (Photo 13). The lobby is divided by a round-arch opening into a foyer at the west end and the main lobby space to the east. This grand entrance hall has a white marble tile floor, marble panel wainscoting and plaster walls with a wood chair rail. The ceiling is coffered with plaster Greek key and rosette motifs and gilded egg-and-dart molding (Photo 14). An elevator at the east end of the lobby is in the original location, but appears to date to the late twentieth century. Additional original features include bronze sconces and chandeliers, a bronze letterbox that connects to the upper floors, and bronze-framed display windows. The main stair (described above) is in the southwest corner of the main hall.

The second floor has remained relatively unaltered in comparison to the basement and first floors of the building. The main north-south corridor is accessed by the north and south staircases at either end, and the passenger elevator from the main lobby below is at the south end of the hall. The original glass and bronze letter box shaft is east of the elevator. The second floor corridor retains its original terrazzo floor, baseboards, and painted burlap wainscoting (Photo 15). A typical office space on the second floor is composed of a large, rectangular open space with one or two entrances from the corridor consisting of either original wood panel doors, some with an upper sash filled with patterned, frosted glass, or a simple replacement wood panel door (Photo 16); many of the office doors have a fixed or hopper, rectangular, patterned, frosted glass transom or a transom infilled with wood. Some office spaces have patterned, frosted glass, single light, fixed wood sash windows on either one or both sides of the main door. Several have simple built-in wood cabinets and counters along one or more walls. The 1975 metal grill covering the east elevation has been cut away in some places, providing additional natural light.

The primary space on the third floor is the original Mallet Library in the southeast end, which has been divided into two offices with a partition wall (Photo 17). The eastern office features a fireplace with a marble surround, an opening lined with terra cotta tile and buff brick, and an oak mantel decorated with

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round, fluted, Doric columns set in pairs on either side of the fireplace opening and a simple geometric motif along the cornice. A built-in oak shelving system is set on the wall around the fire place with lower sets of cabinets with paneled wood doors. The space also retains original oak panel wainscoting.

As the location of the USJB's executive offices, the fourth floor is the most architecturally elaborate level of the building. An expansive lobby has natural-finish oak panel wainscoting, paneled pilasters with Corinthian columns, a simple entablature, and door surrounds, some with projecting rectangular hoods supported by decorative brackets (Photo 18). A long, oak, built-in bench is attached to the west wall of the lobby and has replacement leather cushions. The lobby has a paneled plaster ceiling with low relief plaster detailing and a central oval-shaped dome. A large, stained-glass oculus in the center of the dome (Photo 19) depicts a lamb with a halo, holding a white and orange flag against a red background (a traditional Catholic symbol of Saint John the Baptist and the lamb of God), surrounded by a small circular border of multi-color opalescent glass. From the central light, long rectangular panels of milky white opalescent glass radiate in a circular pattern to a border of teal, green, and pink stained glass laid in a floral and leaf pattern. Bronze light fixtures are centered in plaster medallions around the dome.

East of the lobby is the "Bureau General" meeting room, which has oak wainscoting and plaster walls divided vertically by fluted oak pilasters with Doric capitals (Photo 20). The ceiling is paneled with low-relief plaster detailing and denticulated molding and has a centered plaster medallion and an original bronze chandelier. A thick band of oak cornice trim, ornamented with gilded swags and floral motifs, is set above the capital of each pilaster. The main entrance to the room has swinging, paneled, oak double doors with an oak surround and a projecting rectangular hood supported by decorative brackets with gilded floral motifs. Windows in the Bureau General meeting room are recessed and have round-arch, oak surrounds with keystones. The floor is covered in low pile carpeting.

West of the lobby is a central, double-loaded corridor that runs north-south with large office and conference spaces on the east and west sides (Photo 21). These rooms originally housed the executive offices of the USJB. The entryway between the lobby and the corridor has a large set of paneled, oak swinging doors with an oak surround consisting of single-light side lights, and a tripartite, rectangular transom. Throughout these office spaces is low pile carpeting, either late twentieth-century wood paneling or plaster walls of the same style as the lower floors, and suspended acoustic tile ceilings with florescent lights. This area primarily features original stained wood panel doors, some with frosted glass upper sashes. Two original bathrooms on this level are also mostly intact, one in the southeast corner of the building and the other midway along the north wall of the building. They have tile floors and tile wainscoting, plaster walls, marble stall dividers with swinging wood panel doors, and suspended acoustic tile ceilings. Bathroom fixtures include a mix of original porcelain pedestal sinks and modern replacement sinks and both original and replacement porcelain toilets.

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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.)

ETHNIC HERITAGE/Other-French Canadian

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1926-1968

Significant Dates

1926 – construction

1968 – USJB changes organization's official language to English and faces decline of membership

1975 – exterior renovations

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Fontaine, Walter F. – architect, 1926

Bouvier-Brien Construction Company – builder, 1926

Crowley Realty Company – architect, 1975

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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.)

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique (USJB) building possesses significance at the statewide level under Criterion A in the areas of Ethnic Heritage and Social History and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Under Criterion A, the building is significant for its association with French Canadian immigrants and Americans of French Canadian descent as the home office of USJB for 68 years (1927–1994). The USJB was a beneficial and fraternal organization for French Canadian Catholics chartered in Rhode Island on May 7, 1900, operating as one of only two nationwide French Canadian fraternal benefit organizations in the United States. The USJB building at 1 Social Street in Woonsocket was purpose-built by the USJB in 1926 to replace the society's original home offices in the nearby Unity Building (1886, 1 Clinton Street, within the National Register-listed Main Street Historic District). Construction of the new headquarters inaugurated a period of success and growth for the USJB, which reached over 51,000 members nationwide that year. In 1954, the USJB hit its peak national membership of 78,280. In 1994, the USJB's headquarters moved from its Social Street location to the Plaza Center at the corner of Clinton and Cumberland streets in Woonsocket after merging with the Catholic Family Life Insurance (CFLI) company in 1991. The USJB served as CFLI's New England division until 2010, when the company was renamed Catholic Financial Life.

Under Criterion C, the building is an intact and representative example of early twentieth-century commercial architecture designed in the Classical Revival style by prolific Woonsocket-based architect Walter F. Fontaine. Classical Revival-style architecture in downtown Woonsocket was often used by financial institutions and businesses in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Period of Significance Justification

The period of significance begins in 1926 when the building was constructed and ends in 1968 when the USJB changed its official language from French to English, marking a major shift in how the organization functioned and the role it played in French Canadians' lives.

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

CRITERION A – ETHNIC HERITAGE AND SOCIAL HISTORY

French Canadian Immigration and Settlement in New England, 1860–1930

The USJB organization and its national headquarters in downtown Woonsocket were founded during the peak of French Canadian immigration and settlement in New England in the first quarter of the twentieth century. French immigrants arrived in Canada to settle “New France” as early as the seventeenth century, and French Canadian culture and tradition, often referred to as Québécois, developed within this geographic context. Into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, French Canadians were devout Roman Catholics with strong attachments to and a protective attitude towards their culture, religion, and language. *La Survivance*,

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a Québécois term for survival, is used to describe French Canadians' efforts to promote and protect their heritage (Brault 1986:1–2, 51–53; Sorrell 1981:91–93; Andrade 2013; Rafael 1997:6–7). The concept of *La Survivance* was the impetus for establishing French Canadian cultural organizations like the USJB across Canada and the United States.

In the mid-to-late nineteenth century, job scarcity and unsuccessful farming in Québec led many French Canadians to relocate to New England's prosperous industrial cities and towns. French Canadian immigration to New England peaked in the mid-to-late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in two phases of chain migration between 1860 and 1930. In this period, nearly one-third of Québec's French Canadian population immigrated to the United States (Bellerose 1998:7–8), with approximately 555,000 settling in New England (Bélanger 2000a).²

In the first phase of migration from 1860 to 1890, many French Canadians worked seasonally in New England mills and returned to Canada for the farming season (Brault 1986:1–2, 51). In the second phase of migration between 1890 and 1930, an estimated 320,000 French Canadians immigrated to New England, with many choosing to stay permanently (Ramirez and Otis 2001:68, 85). By 1900, 573,000 French Canadians were in New England, including 61,000 in Rhode Island and 275,000 in Massachusetts (Brault 1986; Appendix B–Table 6). During this time, central and southeastern New England, including Massachusetts and Rhode Island, gained some of the largest concentrations of French Canadian immigrants. Most settled in small and medium-sized industrial centers with mills, such as Woonsocket, Rhode Island, and Fall River, Massachusetts (Brault 1986:3). By the 1920s, the more than 30,000 French Canadians in Woonsocket made up approximately 75 percent of the city's population (Fortin 1988:77–79; Sorrell 1981:91–93, 95; Brault 1986:1–3, 51; Andrade 2013; Chartier 1999:33).

French Canadian life in New England revolved around the Catholic Church and adherence to *La Survivance*, resulting in the formation of tight-knit and insular communities, often referred to as *le petit Canada* ("Little Canada"). These communities were established in cities throughout New England and can still be found where French Canadian communities were most prominent, including Woonsocket, Rhode Island. Little Canadas provided French Canadians with a network of peers, institutions, and associations to help with assimilation and discrimination against Roman Catholics or non-English speakers (Fortin 1988:38; Quintal 2000:2–5; Ramierz and Otis 2001:74–78; Chartier 1999:196–198; Andrade 2013).

One of the earliest organizations founded to foster *La Survivance* was the Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste, first established in 1834 in Montréal by publisher and politician Ludger Duvenay (1799–1852) to extol French Canada's patron Saint John the Baptist (Lebel 1985). The Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste acted as a mutual aid society to promote solidarity among French Canadians and provide financial aid and support (including sickness and death benefits) to French Canadians in need. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many immigrants formed American-based French Canadian societies, using the same name and adopting the same mission as the Canadian Société Saint-Jean-Baptiste. Such groups were established throughout New York

² By 2013, the number of Americans of French Canadian descent was approximately 2.1 million of a total of approximately 348 million people in the country (US Census Bureau 2013).

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and the Midwest during the mid-to-late nineteenth century and in New England as early as 1864 in Pittsfield and Springfield, Massachusetts, and then in Connecticut (1865 in Meriden), Vermont (1866 in St. Albans), Maine (1867 in Biddeford), Massachusetts (1868 in Holyoke), and Rhode Island (1868 in Woonsocket) (Brault 1986:77).

French Canadians in Woonsocket, 1860–1930

Woonsocket developed a reputation as a prominent Little Canada in the late nineteenth century, even earning the colloquial distinction of “*la ville plus francaise aux Etats Unis*” (the most French city in the United States) (Sorrell 1981:93–94). Located in the Blackstone River Valley, which connected industrial towns from Worcester, Massachusetts to Providence, Rhode Island, Woonsocket was established in 1867 (incorporated in 1888) when the villages of Woonsocket Falls, Social, and Jenckesville separated from the town of Cumberland. In 1871, the villages of Globe, Bernon, and Hamlet were annexed from Smithfield to create the present-day city boundary (Fortin 1988:11–37, 77–79; Stuart et al. 2017).

Woonsocket’s population increased steadily beginning in the mid-nineteenth century due to the growth of industry and the influx of immigrants who came to work in the mills. By the 1870s, Woonsocket’s French Canadian Roman Catholic community was large enough to warrant separation from the predominantly Irish Roman Catholic parish, Saint Charles Borromeo (Bellerose 1998:8). In 1873, L’Église du Precieux Sang (The Church of the Precious Blood) became the first French Canadian Roman Catholic parish in Woonsocket and one of the two earliest in Rhode Island.³ The church at 94 Carrington Avenue/61 Park Avenue (NR listed 1982) was designed by Walter F. Fontaine and officially dedicated in 1881 (Brault 1986:189; Chase 1982). Father Charles Dauray (1838–1931) served as the parish priest from 1875 to 1931 and played a significant role in the development of Woonsocket’s Little Canada (Bellerose 1998:8–9). The availability of mill work and the establishment of important social anchors like the church facilitated the continued growth of Woonsocket’s French Canadian population. Between 1890 and 1900, Woonsocket’s population increased by 35 percent from 20,830 to 28,204 residents (Rhode Island Statewide Planning 2010).

By 1900, French Canadians made up 60 percent of Woonsocket’s population and the city’s mills were “among the foremost in the area” (Fortin 1988:25). Woonsocket’s reputation as a successful industrial town was in part due to the efforts of Aram J. Pothier (1854–1928), a future Mayor of Woonsocket and future Governor of Rhode Island who served as the state delegate to the Paris Trade Exposition in 1893.⁴ While in France, Pothier met with several French and Belgian textile manufacturers and encouraged them to establish mills in Woonsocket. The companies could avoid paying high tariffs to sell their wares in the United States, employ the large, French-speaking skilled workforce already living in the city, and take advantage of Woonsocket’s tax incentives for the relocation. French-system textile companies began to move into Woonsocket, and between the 1890s and early 1920s, five mills opened in the city: Guerin

³ The French Canadian parish of Notre Dame Church in Central Falls formed in 1873 and opened its church building in 1875 (Conley and Smith 1976:139–140).

⁴ Pothier was the first French Canadian to serve as Mayor of Woonsocket (1894–1896) and as Governor of Rhode Island (1909–1915, 1928–death) (Bellerose 1998:8–9).

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Spinning Mills (1895), Lafayette Worsted (1899), French Worsted (1906), Jules Desurmont Worsted Company (1907), and the Verdun Mill (1922) (Connors 2007).⁵ Woonsocket was a leader in textile manufacturing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and had several substantial machinery and rubber companies (Bellerose 1998:9; Fortin 1988:11–37, 77–79; Stuart et al. 2017).

As the city's textile economy expanded, French Canadian immigrants continued to establish cultural organizations and support systems. By the early twentieth century, the cultural center of Woonsocket's Little Canada—known as “Social Corner” or “the Coin” —was located at the intersection of Social, Cumberland, and Rathburn Streets in the city's downtown (Bellerose 1998:51). By 1919, Woonsocket had five French Canadian national Roman Catholic parishes, the largest concentration of such churches in the state (Rafael 1997:7–8).⁶ Multiple parochial schools were organized to educate the community's children in French, and these schools remained predominantly French Canadian until the mid-twentieth century. (Fortin 1988:77–79; Sorrell 1981:92; Rafael 1997:40–41). By the mid-twentieth century, there were more than 15 French Canadian social organizations in Woonsocket, including the USJB's national headquarters. Institutions like the USJB supported French Canadian immigrants as they strove to establish prosperous businesses and trades or became lawyers, bankers, and politicians who moved upward in social class and financial status (Brault 1986:99–101).

Due to competition from the South after World War I, the cotton industry in Woonsocket collapsed in the 1920s. In 1927, the largest local cotton mill and one of the largest employers of French Canadians, Social Mill, closed permanently. Woolen goods, rubber, and machinery factories continued to be produced through the early twentieth century. In the 1920s, the city's industries became more diversified (Fortin 1988:11–37, 77–79; Stuart et al. 2017).

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The USJB is a quintessential example of the type of social organization formed by French Canadians across the country in the early to mid-twentieth century. The USJB provided an institutionalized approach to protecting and promoting French Canadian culture, the French language, national Roman Catholic parishes, and service to the community. The USJB was one of two nationwide large French Canadian fraternal benefit

⁵ The French mills operating in Woonsocket were known for their high-grade worsted fabric that was produced through the “French system.” The French system differed from the English or “Bradford system” of production in a number of ways. The most significance difference was that the French system sorted raw wool fibers by fineness, not length. This produced very smooth and high-quality worsted fabric. The yarn was initially used for high quality women's wear, but became the yarn of choice for almost all woolen or worsted cloth produced in the country (Connors 2007).

⁶ National Roman Catholic parishes were commonly formed in the nineteenth and twentieth century in cities and towns in the United States that had large populations of specific immigrant groups. These parishes allowed the community to worship in a church with members of the same nationality, and therefore those of the same culture, heritage, and language. It was not uncommon to find Catholic parishes in close proximity to one another that were formed specifically for the Irish, French Canadian, Portuguese, and Polish populations in the city, to name a few which can be found in New England towns and cities.

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organizations in the United States and was headquartered in Woonsocket from its founding in 1900 to its merger with another organization in 1994.⁷

In March 1900, a conference of 76 representatives from 18 French Canadian societies across New England met in Woonsocket, Rhode Island, to organize a nationwide federation. The conference resulted in the incorporation of the USJB in May 1900 as a fraternal and beneficial organization for French Canadians “to promote the social, moral, and educational welfare of members and to render aid in all cases of sickness and disability [and to pay death benefits] to those who are entitled to receive them” (quoted in Fortin 1988:38). The USJB acted as the authority of fraternal functions and sole fiscal agency for insurance programs of the member French Canadian organizations (Fortin 1988:38; Quintal 2000:2–5). The motto was *L'Union fait la force* (In union there is strength). Within a year, the USJB had 1,895 members from 15 separate councils (Quintal 2000:55–56; Assumption College n.d.).

By 1901, the USJB absorbed the Midwestern Association of French Canadian Americans (*L'Association des Canadiens-Français-Américains*), nearly doubling the organization's size. The Midwestern Association consisted of 20 councils, including five in Vermont and two in New York (Quintal 2000:55). At the Second General Convention of the USJB in 1902, in Southbridge, Massachusetts, Félix Gatineau was elected the first President General. That same year, the USJB published its first issue of *L'Union*, a French-language newspaper, which ran until 1979 in French and in English from 1980 until 1996. In 1902, women were officially allowed to become members of the society, and the national membership reached 3,712 members (Quintal 2000:55). By 1903, the USJB officially opened its permanent headquarters in the Unity Building (1 Clinton Street, 1886, within Main Street NRHD) in Woonsocket, where it remained until 1926, when the USJB building was constructed at 1 Social Street (Bellerose 1998:50–51; Sampson and Murdock Co. 1903:388). Between 1902 and 1904, the organization's membership nearly doubled to 7,346. The USJB celebrated its fifth anniversary in 1905 with 9,908 members (Quintal 2000:55).

By 1906, the USJB had 12,353 members nationally, established a Sick Members' Fund, and supported the new Association of Franco-American Newspapers (*L'Association des Journaux Franco-Américains*) (Quintal 2000:55). In 1908, USJB membership was 18,963 in more than 203 councils and the organization purchased the books and papers of Major Edmond Mallet for \$1,969.50, officially starting the Mallet Library collection of writings about French Canadian heritage, history, and experience in America, which

⁷ The other nationally prominent French Canadian fraternal group was the Association Canado-Américaine (ACA), established in Manchester, New Hampshire in 1896, prior to the establishment of the USJB in 1900 in Woonsocket, Rhode Island (Brault 196:77). These two organizations are significant to the national history of French Canadians in America and survival of the French Canadian culture in the United States. The ACA and USJB were centralized umbrella organizations made up of local chapters of French Canadian societies from across the nation. Only nine years after the USJB's establishment and thirteen years after the ACA's establishment, the USJB had increased the member chapters to 255 from 159 and had approximately 8,400 more members than the ACA (Laflamme, Lavigne, and Favreau 1909).

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was housed at the USJB's headquarters in Woonsocket until 2004 (Assumption College n.d.; Quintal 2000:55).⁸

In 1910, the USJB had 24,699 members and more than 270 councils (Quintal 2000:56). In 1915, the USJB decided to move forward with a plan to sell the existing headquarters in Woonsocket to fund the construction of a new national headquarters building in the city to house the rapidly growing organization. By its 25th anniversary in 1925, the USJB had 52,021 members and approved the construction of the new building in Woonsocket (Quintal 2000:57).

The existing national headquarters at 1 Social Street in Woonsocket was constructed in 1926, south of the Little Canada's center in Social Corner, on a parcel previously occupied by the Commercial Hotel (Sanborn Map Company 1911; Bellerose 1998:51). The USJB hired Walter F. Fontaine, a leading Woonsocket-based architect who designed buildings within Little Canadas across New England, to design the national headquarters (Quintal 2000:72; Bellerose 1998:50–51). The structure was designed to be a highly decorative, Classical Revival-style building on a major downtown street in the center of Woonsocket. It represented the prominent place the USJB held in Woonsocket society and French Canadian culture (Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission [RIHPC] 1976:28).

The Woonsocket-based Bouvier-Brien Construction Company constructed the building (Bellerose 1998:51). The four-story building contained a total of 612,043 cubic feet and cost \$27,695 to build (W. F. Fontaine 1926; W. F. Fontaine and Sons n.d.).⁹ It included storefronts on the first story, office spaces for rent on the second and third floors, and the executive offices of the USJB on the fourth floor (W. F. Fontaine and Sons n.d.; Fontaine 1926). The USJB's level had an elaborate entrance lobby, offices for organization officials, and the Bureau General meeting room on the fourth floor. The Mallet Library, additional USJB offices, and a large counting room were housed on the third floor (W. F. Fontaine 1926).

In 1927, the USJB held a large inauguration gala to celebrate its 26th anniversary and the recent opening of the new building (Quintal 2000:58–59; Assumption College n.d.). In the early 1930s, the USJB commissioned Fontaine to renovate the storefronts on the first story, the cafeteria, office, and Council General spaces, and to install revolving doors at the main entrances (W. F. Fontaine and Sons n.d.). From 1926 to the late 1950s, the USJB building also provided commercial and office spaces for rent. Tenants included lawyers, a dentist, tailors, a barber, a doctor, realtors, and a wool dealer. Based on the names of the occupants of the building in directories, many of these occupants may have been of French Canadian descent and members of Woonsocket's Little Canada (Sampson and Murdock Co. 1927–1937; Polk 1938–1959).

⁸ Edmond Mallet (1842–1907) was French Canadian, from Oswego, New York, and a veteran of the Civil War. He served as the Inspector General for Indian Affairs for President Grover Cleveland. Mallet's collection focused on French Canadian heritage and European interactions with Native Americans in the Americas. In 2004, the USJB (then part of Catholic Financial Life) donated the USJB's Mallet Collection to the Emmanuel d'Alzon Library at Assumption College in Worcester, Massachusetts, where it remains today (Assumption College n.d.).

⁹ Fontaine's personal records record area of the buildings in cubic feet, instead of square feet (W. F. Fontaine and Sons n.d.).

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In addition to managing fraternal functions and insurance programs, the USJB organized educational programs in the early twentieth century to foster *La Survivance*. In 1915, the USJB established *La Caisse de l'écolier*, a scholarship fund for French Canadian children attending college (Quintal 2000:57). By 1931, 34 students had received scholarships and 24 had received tuition assistance (Quintal 2000:59). The USJB's members opposed legislative initiatives in New England that would require parochial schools to teach primarily in English, including the 1919 Jackson Bill and the 1920 Chamberlain Bill in Massachusetts and the 1922 Peck Act in Rhode Island (Quintal 2000:55–57; Rafael 1997:27–28; Brault 1986:87–88).

The leaders of the USJB played a key role in the development and success of the organization. Officers Élie Vézina and Henri T. Ledoux¹⁰ led the creation of educational and charitable programs in the early and mid-twentieth century. Vézina served as secretary general from 1911 to 1944 and Ledoux served as president from 1911 to 1946. In 1929, they were honored with the Legion of Honour, an award from France for services to France and French culture. Father Charles Dauray, the influential French Canadian priest of Woonsocket's L'Église du Précieux Sang Roman Catholic Church, served as the USJB's national spiritual director from 1912 until his death in 1931. The USJB was largely successful due to the efforts of its members to recruit other French Canadian organizations across the country and the support offered to the organization's members through varied benefits and community- and cultural-based activities and services (Fortin 1988:38; Quintal 2000:6–8, 56–57).

Between the 1930s to 1950s, the USJB continued to expand and work toward creating a national and international network of members. In 1930, when national membership had reached 51,003, the organization, led by Vézina and J. Arthur Favreau, formed the *Comité France-Amérique* (the Committee) in Woonsocket to promote connections of French Canadians in America with France and Canada. Attorney Eugène L. Jalbert¹¹ was elected president of the Committee, which functioned as a subsidiary to the USJB. Largely due to the efforts of the Committee, the French government donated 50,000 francs and about 900 volumes of books to the USJB for their Mallet Library on French culture and heritage in 1931 and additional funds and books in 1932 to 14 U.S. parochial schools (Quintal 2000:58–60). The USJB also participated in French language congresses in Québec City, and Jalbert helped to form the *Conseil de la vie française en Amérique* at the 1937 Congress to promote *La Survivance* (Quintal 2000:60). In 1939, Dunne's

¹⁰ Élie Vézina (1869–1942) was born in Québec and lived in the Midwest before moving to Woonsocket. He was elected vice president of the USJB in 1904 while living in Chicago, Illinois, and represented the Midwestern population of the USJB and served as secretary general for 25 years. Vézina also served as a member of the five-man committee for President Herbert Hoover to determine if Haiti should become an independent country in 1930 (Quintal 2000:8–9, 62).

Henri T. Ledoux (1873–1970) was born in St. Albans, Vermont, and raised in Nashua, New Hampshire. He was a lawyer who was elected to the state legislature and served as Nashua's tax collector from 1907 to 1914 and as postmaster from 1917 to 1921 (Quintal 2000:7–8; NHHS n.d.). In addition to serving as president general for the USJB, Ledoux also served on the executive committee of the National Fraternal Congress of America and was the president of the New England Fraternal Congress for three years (Quintal 2000:7–8, 62).

¹¹ Eugène Louis Jalbert (1885–1966), of French Canadian heritage, was born in Arctic, West Warwick, Rhode Island. He graduated from the College of Montréal in 1905 and from Boston University Law School in 1910. He was a leading lawyer in Rhode Island, a member of the Executive Committee of the Rhode Island Bar, and an Associate Justice of the Rhode Island Superior Court. He also was an influential figure in the USJB, serving as the organization's legal counsel as early as 1921 and specialized in fraternal organization law and insurance. In 1962, Jalbert was named honorary vice president of the USJB (Rodgers, Jr. 2005:8; Quintal 2000:58, 66; Roby 2004:471; RIHPC 1976:64).

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International Insurance Report, an industry index that covered life insurance and prominent fraternal beneficial societies in the United States and Canada, listed USJB as an “Approved Insurance Company.” It was the only French Canadian mutual benefit society included, a reflection of its stature as the most important French Canadian fraternal organization in the two countries (Quintal 2000:61). By 1940, a working relationship was made with the Louisiana population of Acadians to further promote *La Survivance* among those of French and Canadian descent across the United States (Quintal 2000:61).

By its 50th anniversary in 1950, the USJB was indisputably the foremost French Canadian fraternal organization in the United States. It had grown from 1,895 members in 1901 to 73,915 members and from \$11,475 in assets in 1902 to \$10,617,680 (Quintal 2000:63). By 1954, the USJB hit its peak national membership of 78,280 (Quintal 2000:64). In 1958, the USJB published Robert Rumilly’s *Histoire des Franco-Américains*, one of the first publications to focus on the French Canadian experience in America (Quintal 2000:65–66).

In the 1960s, the USJB transformed its image and revamped its insurance business to compete with modern practices. The organization could no longer sustain its previous business model, due to the changing demographics of the second and third generation French Canadians, who were settling within the middle class and were less reliant on aid from fraternal organizations than their predecessors (Quintal 2000:34). By the 1960s, the organization also began to see a decline in membership that coincided with the changing needs of the members. In 1963, the USJB replaced local USJB recruiters with licensed insurance agents, improving management procedures, and thus increasing productivity. In 1966, the Fraternal Department and the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Educational Foundation were formed to meet members’ evolving needs (Quintal 2000:66–67). The USJB used French as its official language until 1968; the following year, in a watershed change of policy, the organization voted to officially change its name to the English Union Saint-Jean-Baptiste (Quintal 2000:68).

In 1975, as part of its 75th anniversary, the USJB hired Crowley Realty Corp. of Leominster, Massachusetts, to reorient its headquarters building to face east and make changes to give it a contemporary appearance. The alterations to the building included the addition of a metal grill system and modern storefront surround on the facade and reorientation of some of the interior rental spaces (Assumption College n.d.; RIHPC 1976:76; Crowley Realty Corp. 1975). The original exterior materials remain intact underneath the 1975 alterations (Aharonian & Associates 2017). The former commercial buildings to the northeast was demolished and the street widened sometime between 1961 and 1963, enabling the creation of a new primary entrance on the east (NETR 1961–1971).

In 1986, the USJB purchased land at the corner of Clinton and Cumberland streets from the Woonsocket Redevelopment Authority and constructed a commercial building known as the Plaza Center (Quintal 2000:71; Bellerose 1998:50–51). Following a continued decline in membership, fraternal organization and insurance operations, the USJB sold the USJB building to the Catholic Order of Foresters of Naperville,

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Illinois, in 1989.¹² The USJB remained in the building for five more years and then relocated to Plaza Center in 1994. The Catholic Order of Foresters sold the property at 1 Social Street to Ryad Holdings, LLC of Bellingham, Massachusetts in 2005, which was the first time in 79 years a fraternal organization did not own the building. The property is now owned by Innovation Plaza, LLC and is a mixed-use building (Quintal 2000:71–73; Woonsocket Assessors 2017).

Meanwhile, in 1991, USJB merged with Catholic Family Life Insurance (CFLI) and became the New England division of CFLI. Catholic Family Life Insurance (originally named The Family Protective Association) was established in Wisconsin in 1868 by the first Archbishop of Milwaukee, Most Reverend John Martin Henni. The organization is the oldest Catholic fraternal benefit society in the country and became the first to insure men, women, and children. The organization was renamed Catholic Family Life Insurance in 1949 and merged with several other Catholic fraternal benefit societies since the late twentieth century; including the USJB (1991), Northern Fraternal Life (1993), and the Catholics Knights of America (2010). All divisions of CFLI became Catholic Life Financial in 2010. The organization still operates as a fraternal benefit society today, providing member benefits, insurance, and community-driven activities (CFLI 2017).

CRITERION C – ARCHITECTURE

Commercial Architecture in Woonsocket and the Classical Revival Style

The USJB building is located in the northern end of Woonsocket's commercial district along Main Street. By the late nineteenth century, the commercial district was a diverse area with specialized stores, professional offices, various social organizations, and multiple financial institutions. In the early twentieth century, the downtown underwent a major redevelopment, largely due to the success and growth of the town as a leading industrial hub in the Blackstone River Valley. Existing wood-frame buildings that surrounded Monument Square at the easternmost end of the district were torn down, and new masonry buildings, of similar massing, form, and height were constructed in the styles most popular at the time, including Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Classical Revival. With the construction of notable buildings, such as the USJB (1926), the Stadium Building and Theater (1926), the Brown-Carroll Building (1926), and the Montgomery Ward Building (1929), the downtown evolved into an architecturally cohesive and dense commercial center (Fitch 1990; Fortin 1988:79–80).

In 1926, the USJB hired Walter F. Fontaine (1871–1938) as the architect for its new building on Social Street. Fontaine was notable for his ecclesiastical, educational, commercial, and residential buildings in other Little Canadas across New England, as well as buildings that served the French Canadian population in Woonsocket, including L'Église du Précieux Sang Church (94 Carrington Avenue and 61 Park Avenue, NR Listed 1976), Saint Anne's Church (84 Cumberland Street, NR listed 1982), and Holy Family Church (414 South Main Street). The new USJB headquarters was set between the Stadium Building and Theater to the west and a two-story brick commercial building to the east at the corner of Worrall and Social Streets.

¹² The Catholic Order of Foresters is a Catholic benevolent and fraternal organization that was formed in 1895. This group provided sick benefits to its members, but did not provide insurance (Laflamme, Lavigne, and Favreau 1909).

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The USJB has a typical commercial block form, with storefronts on the first story and offices above, with a limestone facade and Classical Revival-style decorative elements incorporated into the design. Other notable Classical Revival style buildings within the commercial and business downtown of Woonsocket are the S. S. Kresge Company (1923, 116–120 Main Street, extant), Woonsocket Institution for Savings (1926, 138–148 Main Street, extant), the Rhode Island Hospital Trust Co. Bank (1929, 162–168 Main Street), and the Longley Building (1890, 194–202 Main Street) (Fitch 1990).

The exterior of the building exhibits many characteristics of the Classical Revival style, which gained popularity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and was on display at major national expositions, such as the Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago. American architects such as Walter Fontaine, who travelled and trained in Europe, were influenced by the approach taught at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris that emphasized order, symmetry, formal design, and elaborate ornamentation. These architects highlighted and popularized historical interpretations of European architectural styles in their work in the United States (Bhaskaran 2005:58; Stuart et al. 2017). The USJB uses a common Classical Revival-style vocabulary: block massing, symmetry of elements and facade, and extensive use of classically inspired pilasters and other ornamental details, including swags, Greek keys, and dentils. The building retains its original stamped sheet metal storefront on the first story of the facade beneath the 1975 storefront alterations.

Metal facades and decorative elements are a common element of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commercial blocks in downtown areas, including Woonsocket. Buildings within the National Register-listed Main Street Historic District that retain cast iron or stamped sheet metal storefronts or facades include Honan's Block (1879, 108–110 Main Street, cast-iron facade, individual National Register listing), 112–114 Main Street (1895–1911, pressed metal upper stories), Unity Building (1886, 1 Clinton Street, cast-iron storefront), and the Buell Building (192–1923, 73–75 Main Street, cast-iron entrance). The City Hall/Harris Block (1856, remodeled 1891, 169 Main Street) originally had a cast-iron storefront, which was removed in the 1891 remodel of the building (Fitch 1990). Many of the buildings in the downtown area retain cast-iron and sheet metal cornices and trim details. The USJB's stamped sheet metal storefront is one of the most intact and decorative examples of a metal storefront in Downtown Woonsocket.

Woonsocket's business district changed in the mid-twentieth century, when the Main Street area began to decline as a result of the downturn of the textile industry. Historic buildings in the downtown core succumbed to neglect and vacancy and were subsequently demolished. However, beginning in the 1950s, a "new" downtown of Woonsocket was created east of the traditional commercial district through urban renewal initiatives by the City. A new post office, library, police station, and new office buildings were constructed on the south side of Social Street between Worrall Street and Cumberland Street north of the USJB building. The new development area was easily accessed by automobile and had large parking lots. Between 1961 and 1963, the two-story commercial building northeast of the USJB building was torn down. Worrall Street was widened from two lanes to four with a median in 1970–1971. The USJB reoriented its building to face the new center of business in the city as part of its 1975 remodeling (see above). The USJB building played a prominent role in the development of Woonsocket's downtown during the city's heyday as an industrial center in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the 1975 reorientation allowed the organization to remain visible as the city reconsidered its commercial corridor.

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Walter F. Fontaine

Walter F. Fontaine (1871–1938) was arguably the most notable architect in Woonsocket during the twentieth century and was well-known throughout southern New England. Fontaine's father, John B. Fontaine, was born in 1836 and emigrated from Saint Hyacinthe, Québec, to Woonsocket in 1857. John Fontaine became a successful builder, constructing the original Saint Ann's Church, Convent, and Gymnasium (1913–1924). Walter Fontaine was born in Woonsocket, attended Woonsocket public schools, and began his architecture training in 1887, when he studied with Woonsocket-based architect and civil engineer Willard Kent. After working at Kent's office for five years, Fontaine studied architecture in France, later returning to Rhode Island, where he worked for the prominent architectural firm of Stone, Carpenter & Willson in Providence from 1893 to 1903. Fontaine came back to Woonsocket in 1903, forming the firm of Fontaine & Kinnicutt with Elmer H. Kinnicutt. The company's first commissioned works were a commercial building on Main Street and a police station on Front Street. In 1906, Fontaine traveled back to France to study the factory building designs of the Tiberghien and Sons Company, a renowned French textile company, prior to designing the company's new French Worsted Company buildings in Woonsocket (1906, Hamlet Avenue, NR listed 2008, no longer extant). Fontaine and Kinnicutt worked together until Kinnicutt's death in 1910 (O. Fontaine 1976; Fortin 1988; W. F. Fontaine and Sons n.d.; Withey and Withey 1956:214; Stuart et al. 2017).

In Woonsocket, Fontaine designed at least four commercial buildings: The Social Amusement Company Theatre (1920, 17 Cumberland Street, no longer extant), Commercial Block (1902, 99–113 Main Street), Hotel Blackstone (1929, 23 Clinton Street within the Main Street NR Historic District); and a Sears Roebuck Co. store on Main Street (no longer extant). His designs for civic, ecclesiastical, and institutional structures include a fire station, at least four church buildings, the Police Station (1904), the Woonsocket YMCA (1909), the First Methodist Church (1909), Saint Ann's Church (1914), Saint Ann's Gymnasium, Mount Saint Charles Academy, Holy Family Church, Our Lady of Victories Church, and the Governor Aram Jules Pothier Mausoleum in the Precious Blood Cemetery in Woonsocket. Outside of Woonsocket, he designed Our Lady of Lourdes Parish buildings in Providence (1905), the Rhode Island Institute for the Deaf and State Tuberculosis Hospital in Burrillville (ca. 1920), and Saint Charles Borromeo Church in Providence (ca. 1930). Fontaine is responsible for a variety of Roman Catholic complexes (churches, rectories, convents, schools, and hospitals), civic, industrial (including textile factory buildings), commercial, and residential buildings throughout Massachusetts and Connecticut (O. Fontaine 1976; Fortin 1988; W. F. Fontaine and Sons n.d.; Withey and Withey 1956:214; Stuart et al. 2017).

Walter Fontaine also served as a member of the Woonsocket's Town Council, Board of Licenses, and the Park Commission and later the State Planning Board. He died during the Hurricane of 1938 at his summer home in Charlestown, Rhode Island, and is buried in the Precious Blood Cemetery in Woonsocket. Walter Fontaine's sons, Paul N. and Oliver W., began working in his firm in the 1920s. When they were made partners in 1935, the firm of W. F. Fontaine and Sons was established and continued in operation by the two brothers until 1948 (O. Fontaine 1976; Fortin 1988; W. F. Fontaine and Sons n.d.; Withey and Withey 1956:214; Stuart et al. 2017).

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The USJB building is a rare example among Fontaine's works as one of the few commercial buildings he designed. It is also a highly decorative building incorporating elements that denote the Classical Revival style, including Corinthian pilasters, denticulated cornices, and carved relief panels depicting swags. Fontaine often designed in the Classical Revival style and incorporated the decorative elements seen in the USJB building, but not in such an elaborate combination.

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L'Union Saint-Jean-Baptiste d'Amérique

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L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique

Providence Co., RI

Name of Property

County and State

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1997 *La Survivance: A Companion to the Exhibit at the Museum of Work & Culture, Woonsocket, Rhode Island*. Rhode Island Historical Society, Woonsocket, RI.

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L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
Name of Property

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County and State

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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: French Institute, Assumption College, Worcester, MA; Crowley-Bacon Room Collection. Woonsocket High School, Woonsocket, RI; Museum of Work and

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
Name of Property

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Culture, Woonsocket, RI; Woonsocket Harris Public Library, Woonsocket, RI; Rhode Island
Historical Society, Providence, RI

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.65 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

Latitude: 42.002093 N

Longitude: 71.304291 W

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone:

Easting:

Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique encompasses City Assessor's Parcel 230 on Plat Map 14, which contains a total land area of 0.65 acres within the northwest area of Woonsocket, Rhode Island, and is bounded by Social Street to the northwest, Worrall Street to the northeast, Federal Street to the southeast and abutting property to the southwest.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is the historic lot lines associated with the parcel at 1 Social Street. The boundaries follow legally recorded property lines.

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Melissa J. Andrade/Architectural Historian; Virginia H. Adams/Senior Architectural Historian; Quinn R. Stuart/Architectural Historian; Michelle H. Johnstone/Asst. Architectural Historian
organization: The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL)
street & number: 26 Main Street
city or town: Pawtucket state: Rhode Island zip code: 02860
e-mail vadams@palinc.com
telephone: (401) 728-8780
date: December 2017

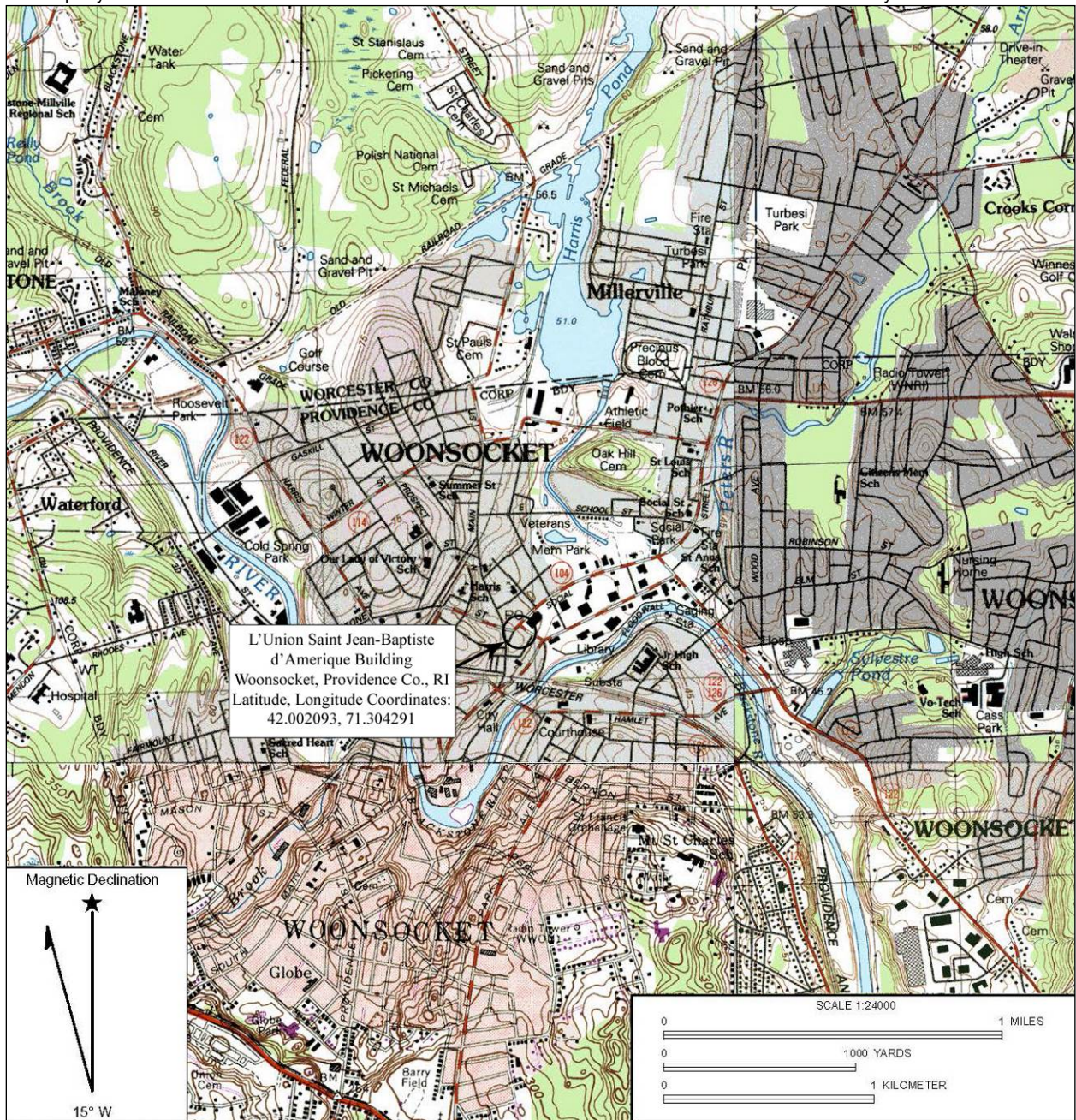
Additional Documentation

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.)

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
Name of Property

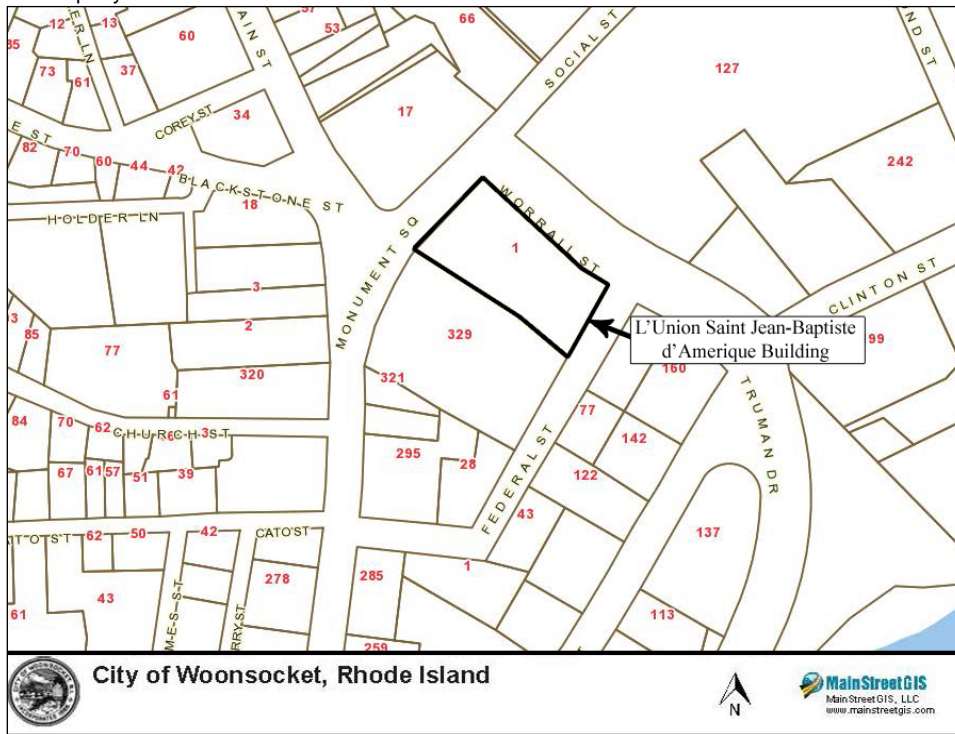
Providence Co., RI
County and State



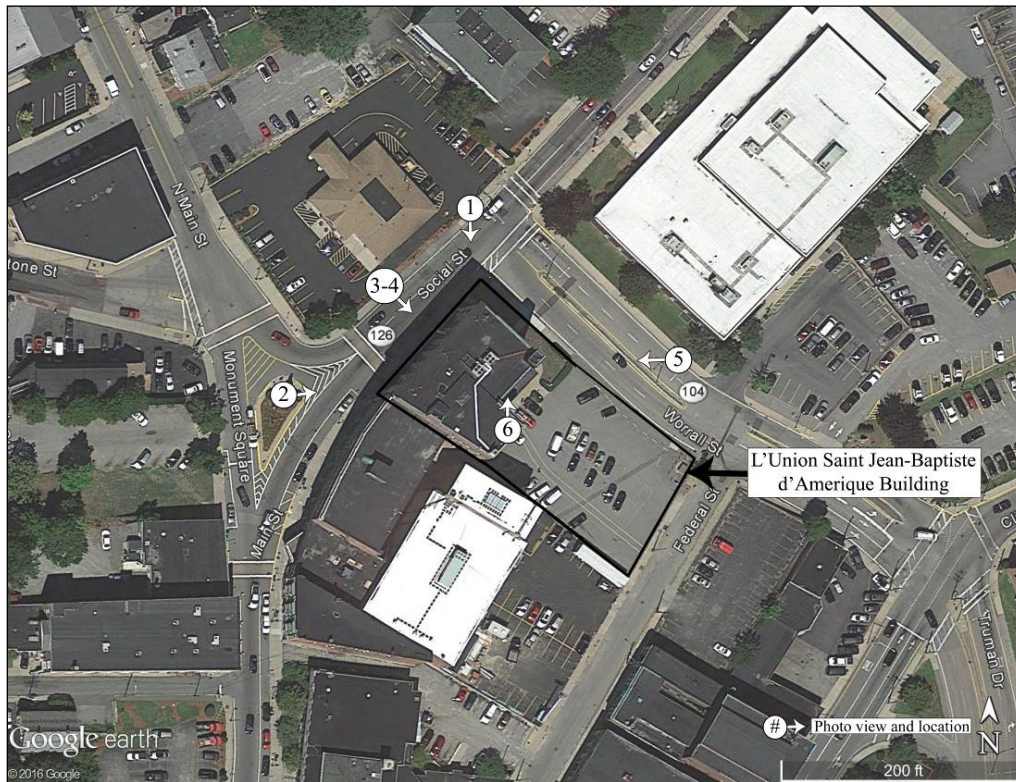
Location of the USJB Building.

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
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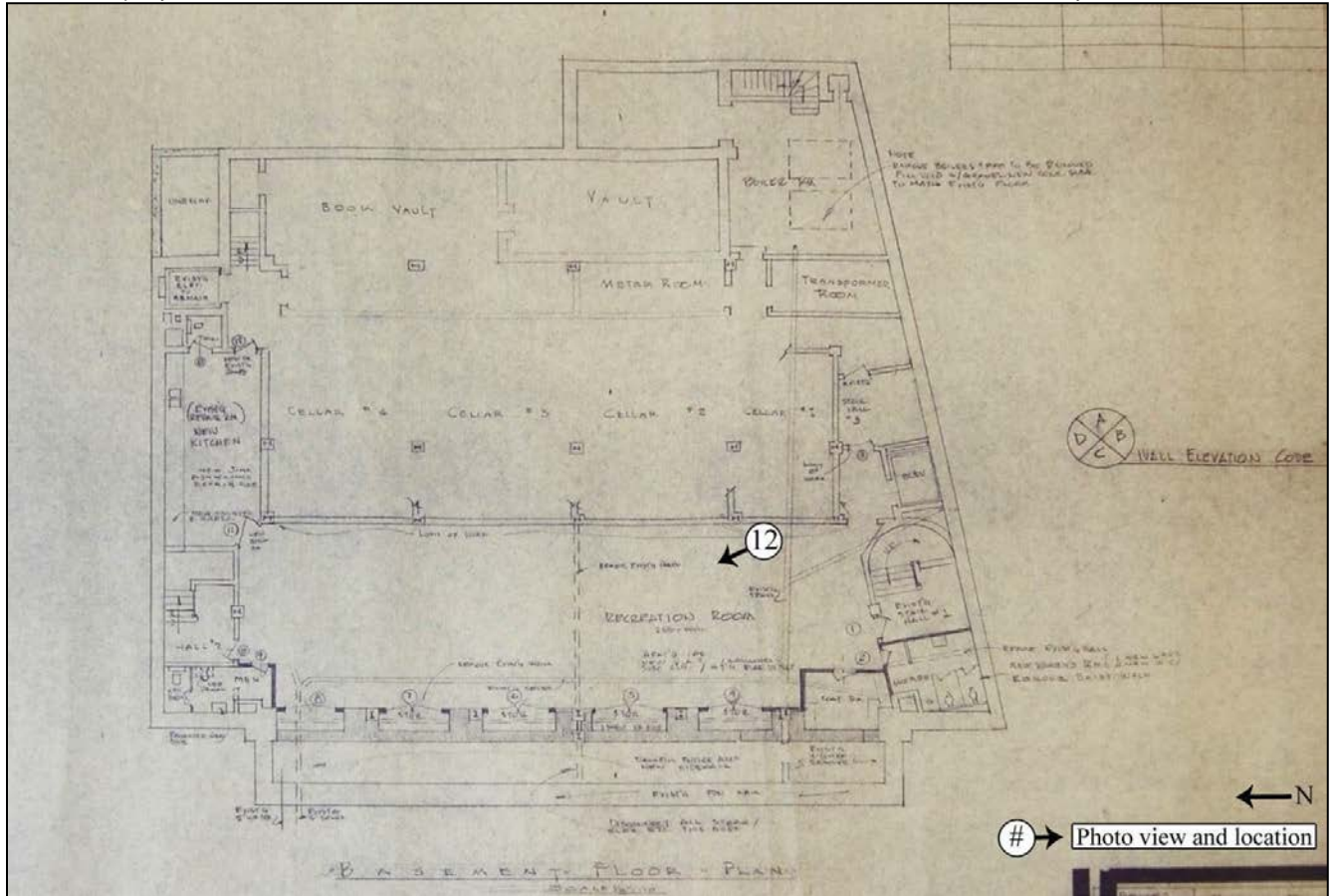
Location of the USJB building, Woonsocket Assessor's Map (Plat Map 14, Parcel 230).



Aerial image of the USJB building, showing exterior photo views and locations (source: Google Earth).

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
Name of Property

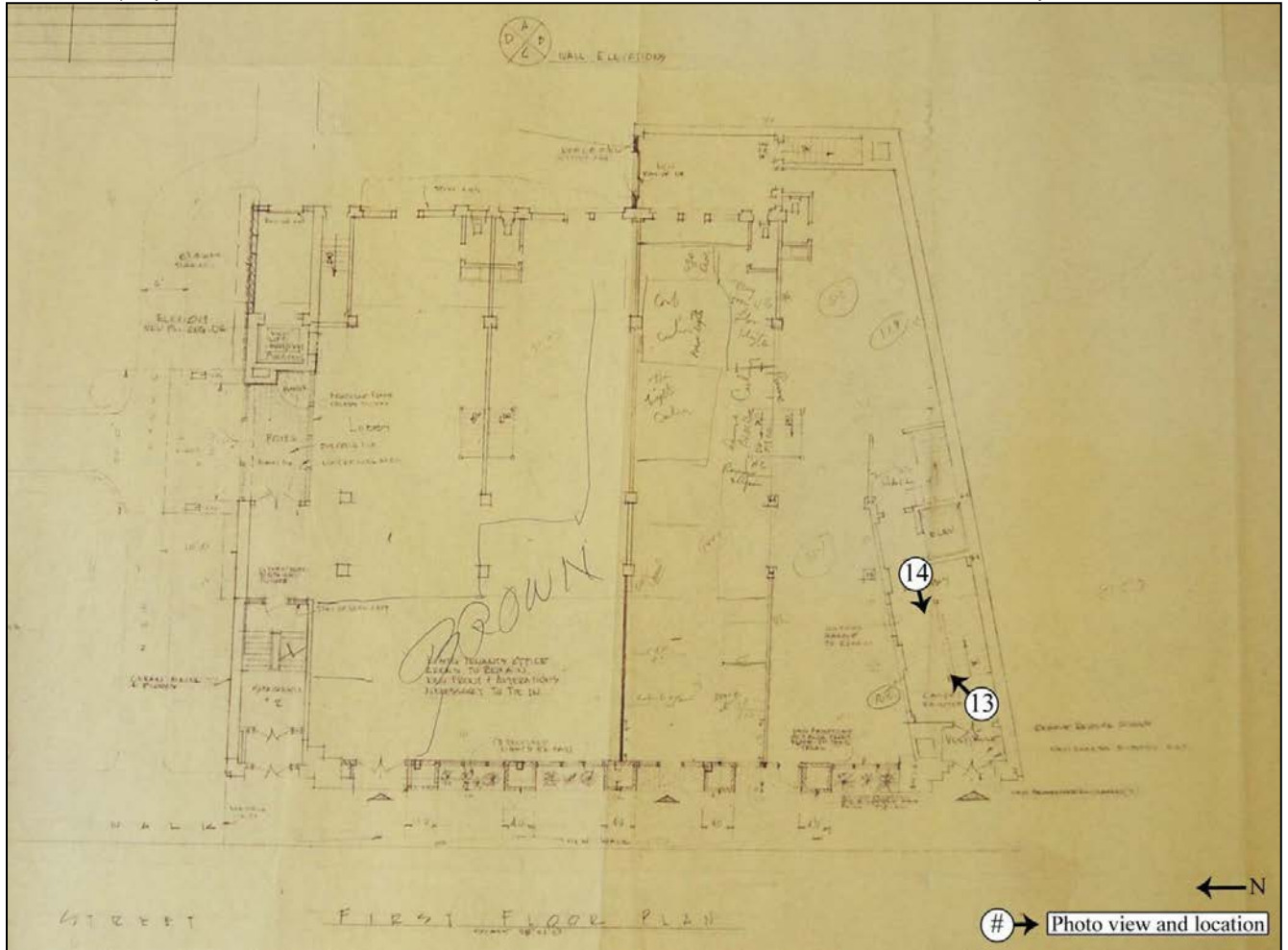
Providence Co., RI
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Basement plan, showing interior photo views and locations, 1975 (source: Crowley Realty Corp.).

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
Name of Property

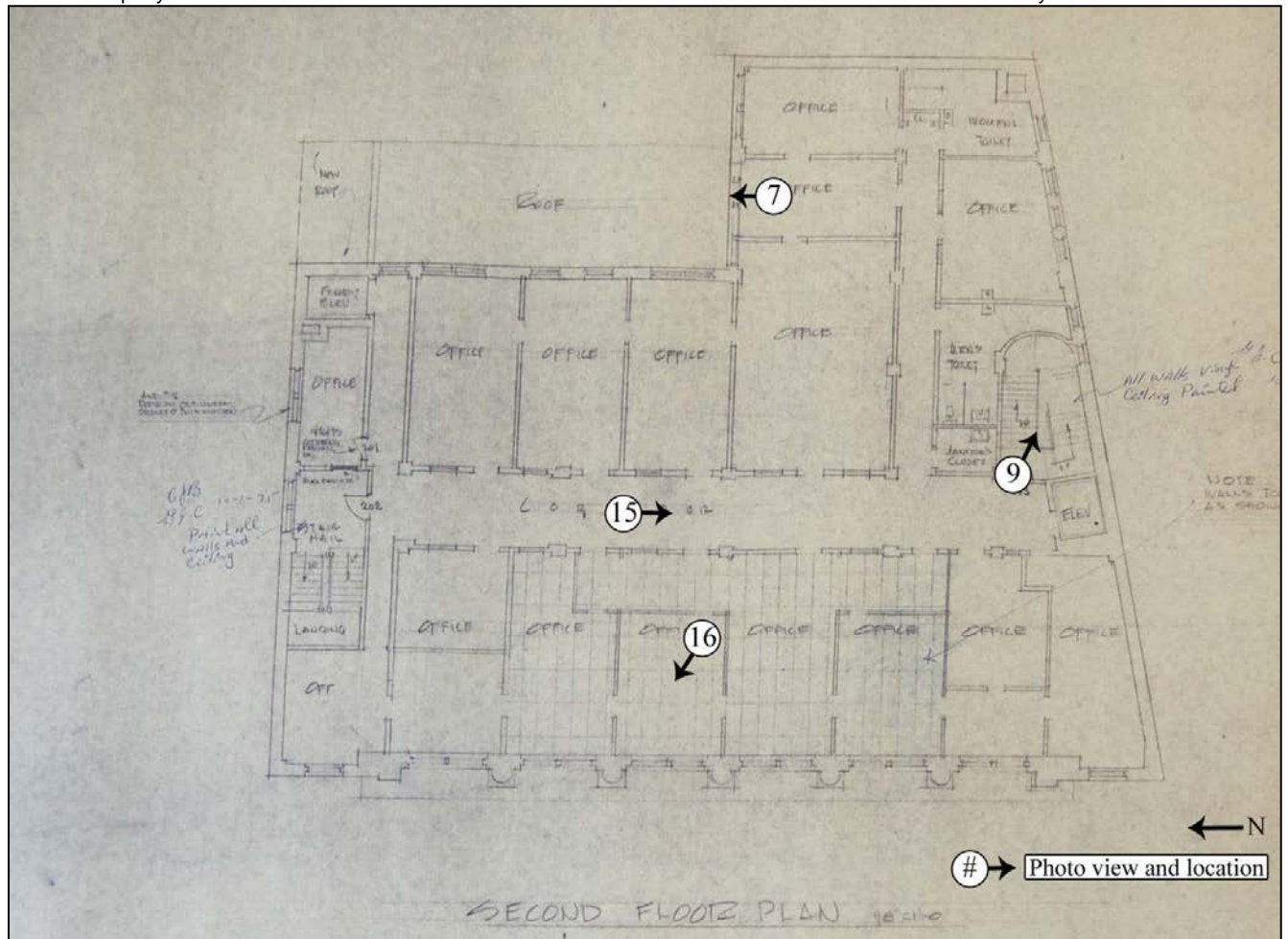
Providence Co., RI
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First floor plan, showing interior photo views and locations, 1975 (source: Crowley Realty Corp.).

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
Name of Property

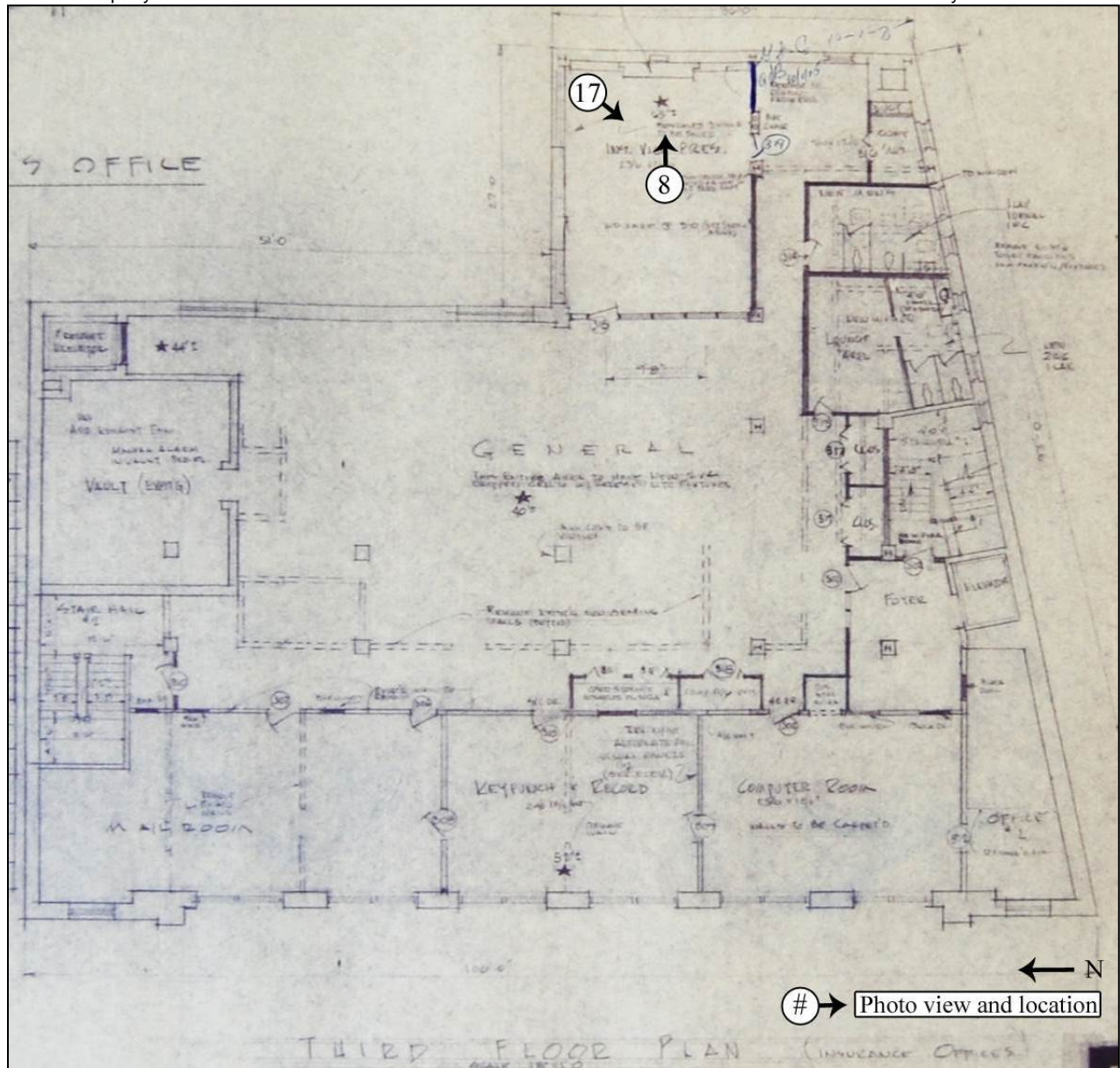
Providence Co., RI
County and State



Second floor plan, showing interior photo views and locations, 1975 (source: Crowley Realty Corp.).

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
Name of Property

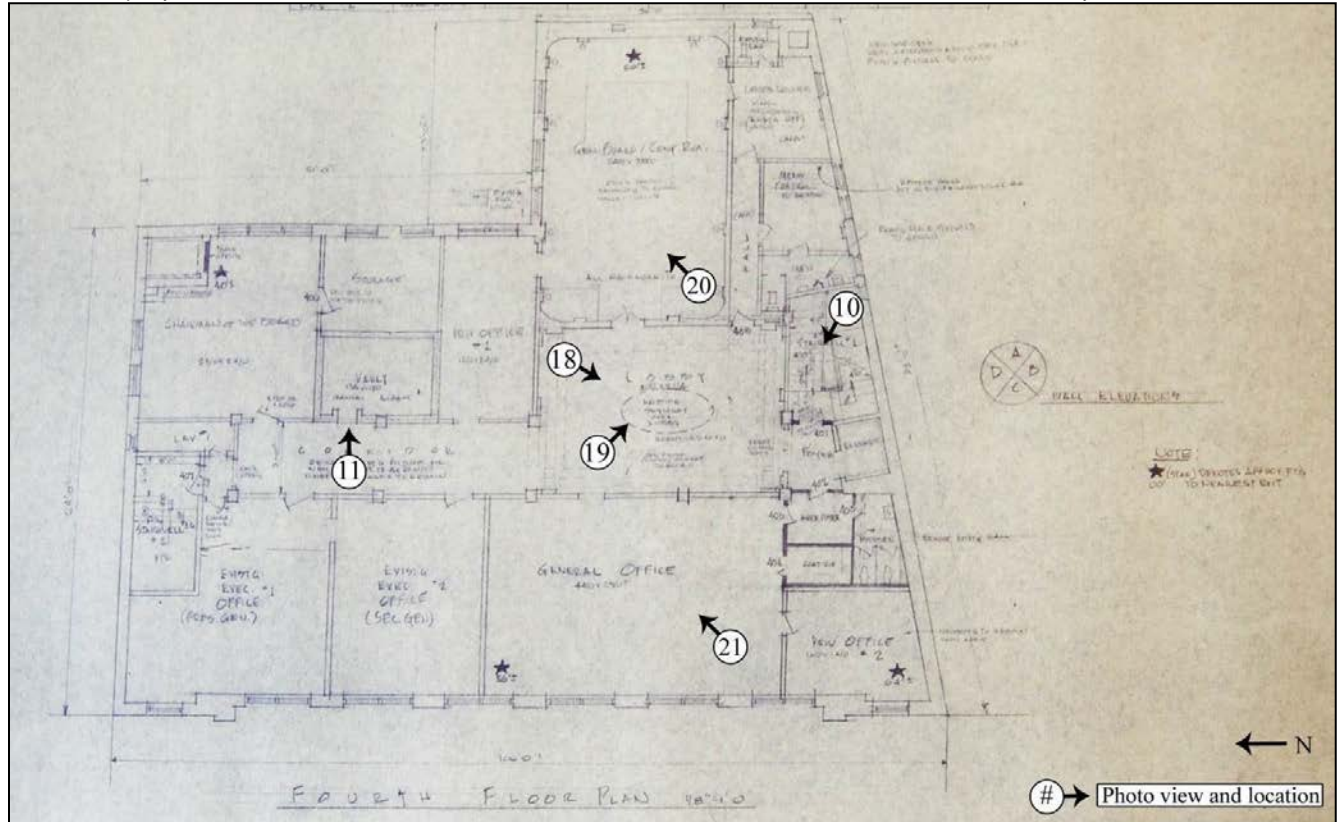
Providence Co., RI
County and State



Third floor plan, showing interior photo views and locations, 1975 (source: Crowley Realty Corp).

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
Name of Property

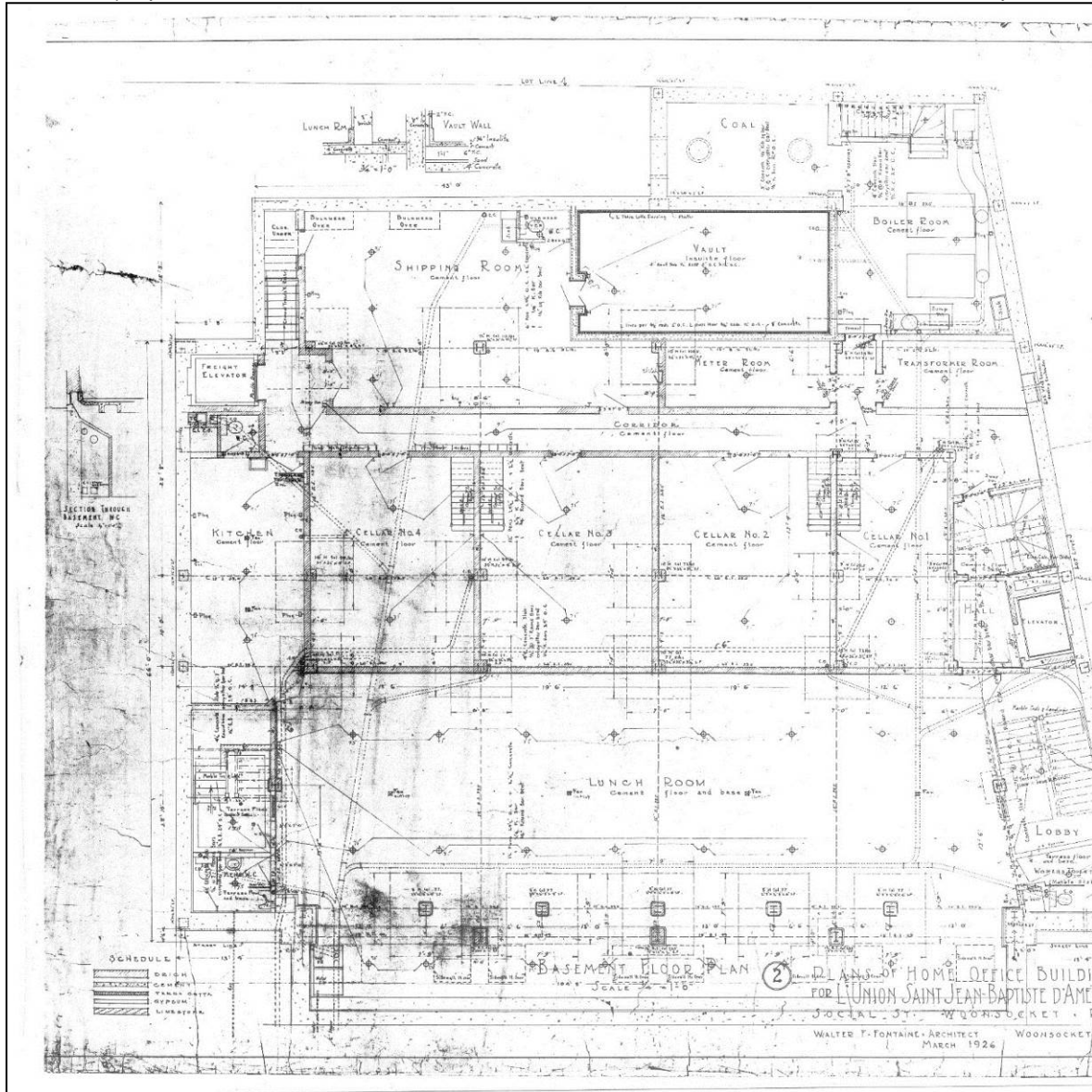
Providence Co., RI
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Fourth floor plan, showing interior photo views and locations, 1975 (source: Crowley Realty Corp.).

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
Name of Property

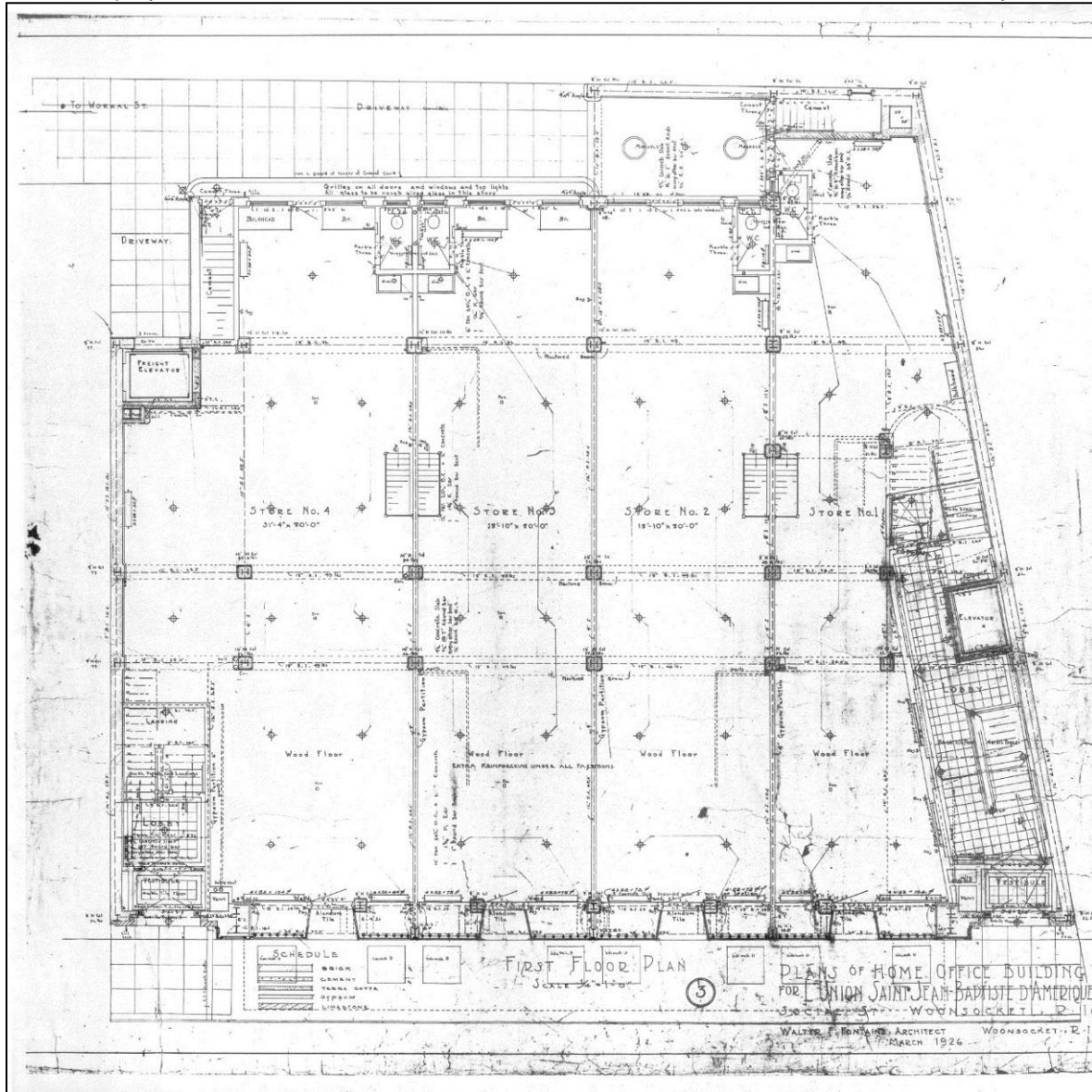
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1926 Basement Plan (source: Fontaine 1926).

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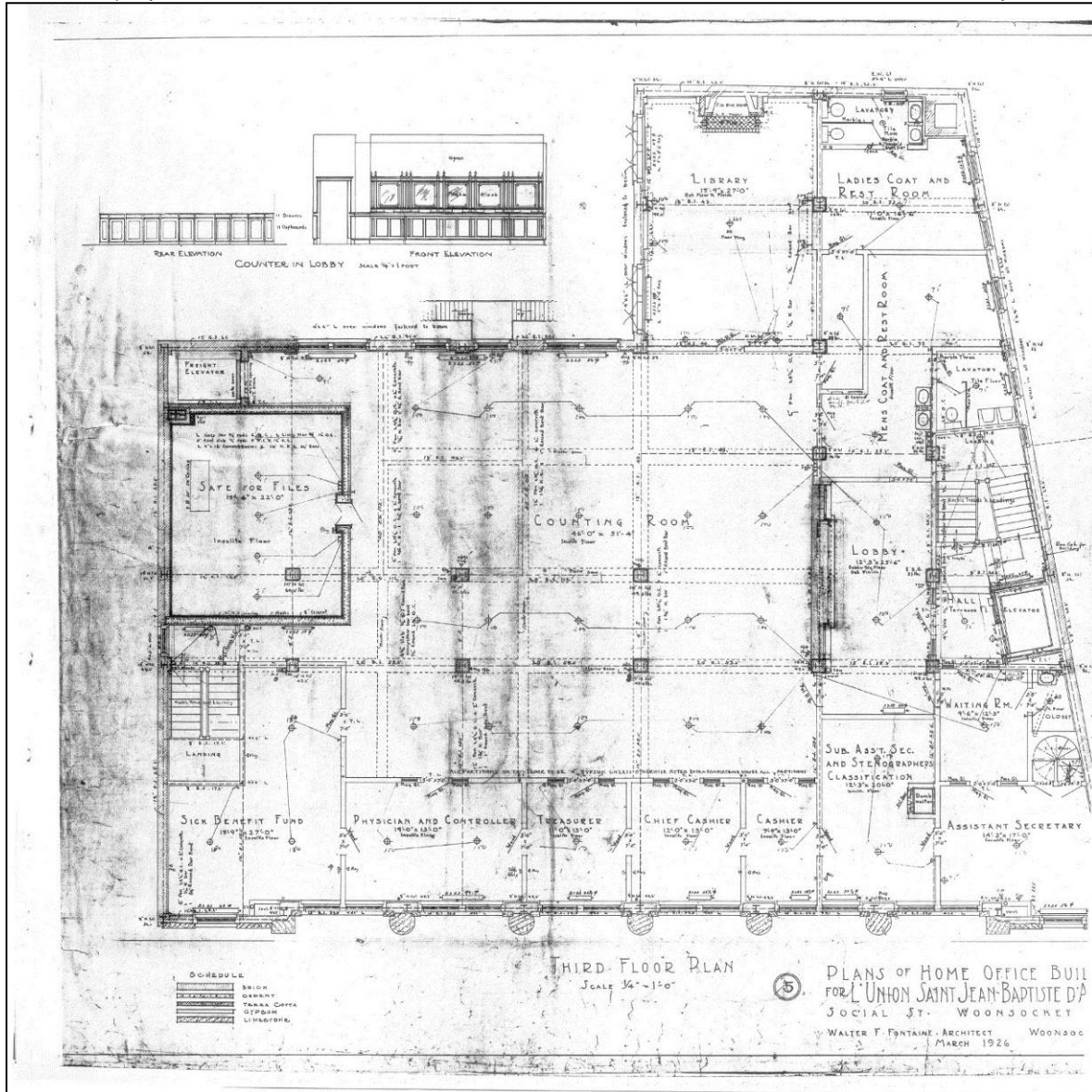
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1926 First Floor Plan (source: Fontaine 1926).

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
Name of Property

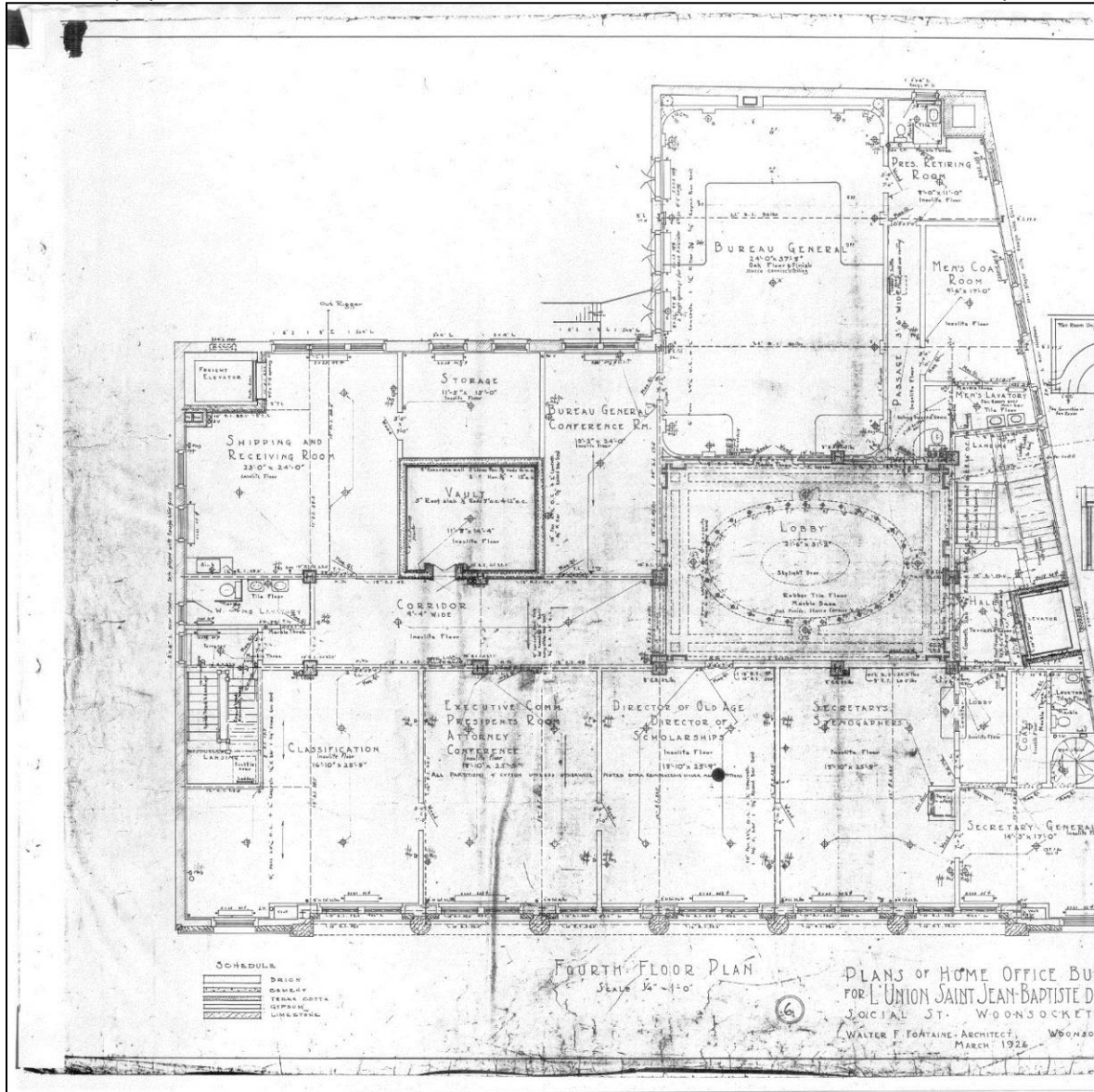
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1926 Third Floor Plan (source: Fontaine 1926).

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
Name of Property

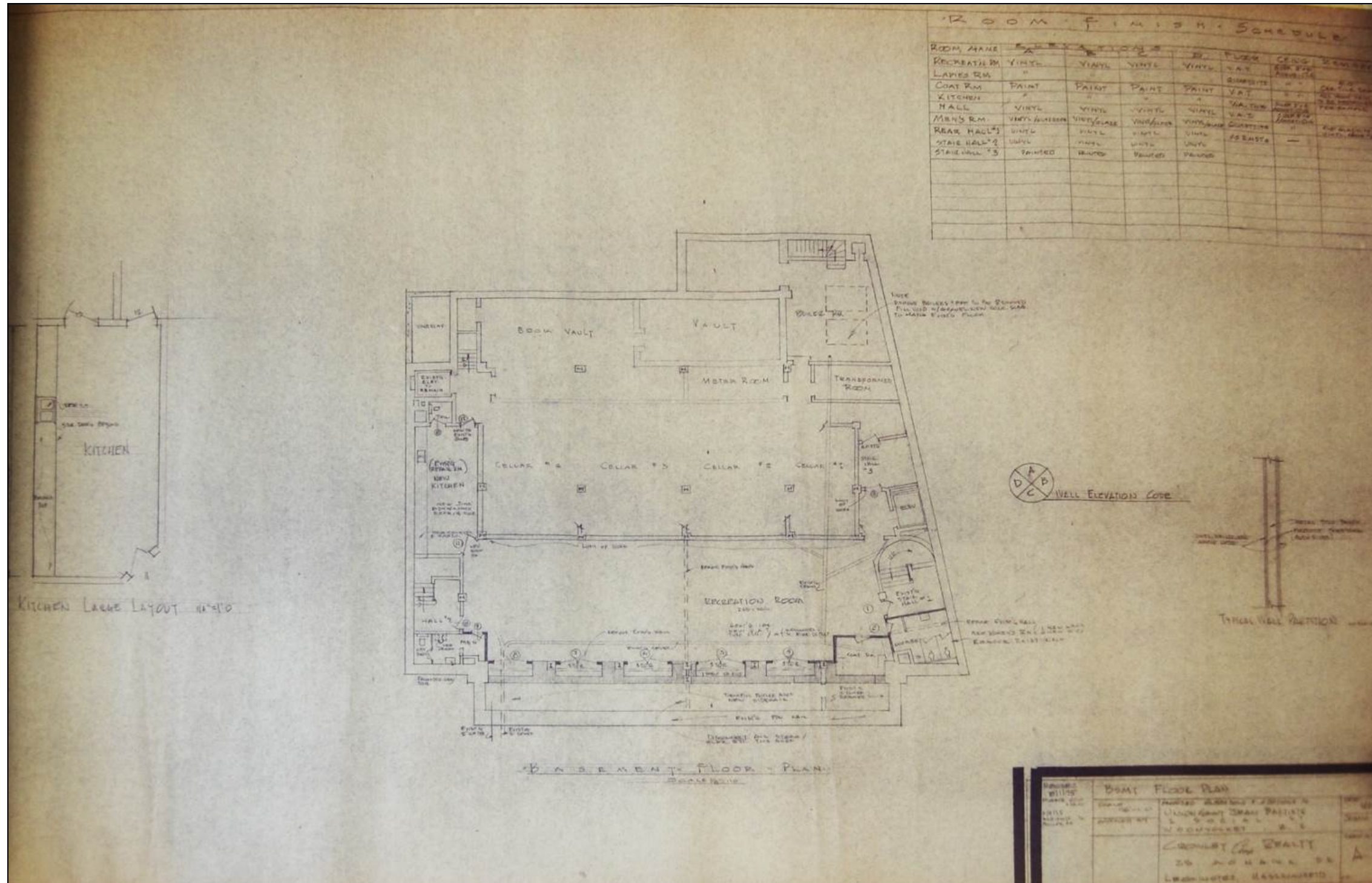
Providence Co., RI
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1926 Fourth Floor Plan (source: Fontaine 1926).

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
 Name of Property

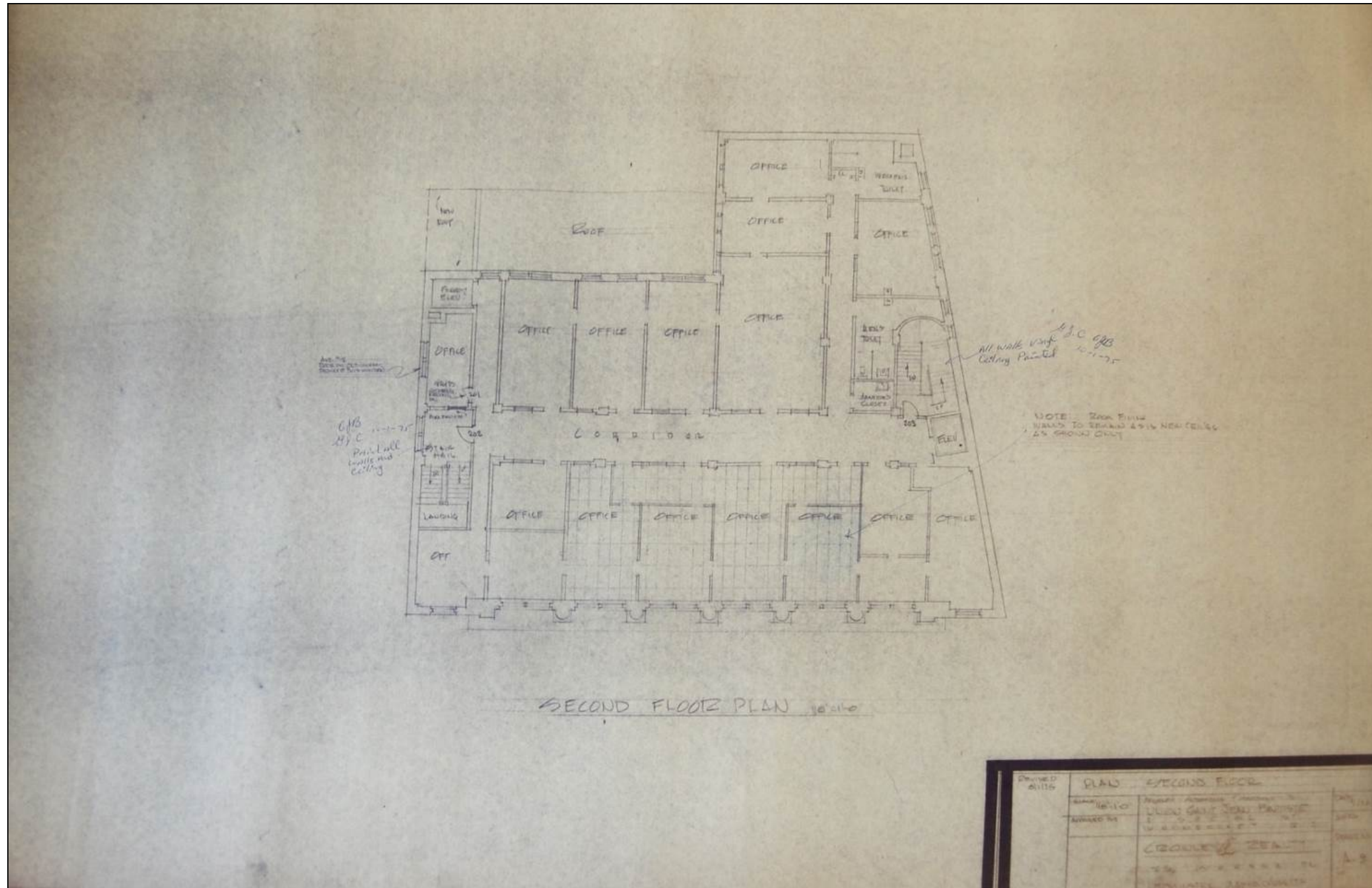
Providence Co., RI
 County and State



1975 Basement Plan (source: Crowley Realty 1975).

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
Name of Property

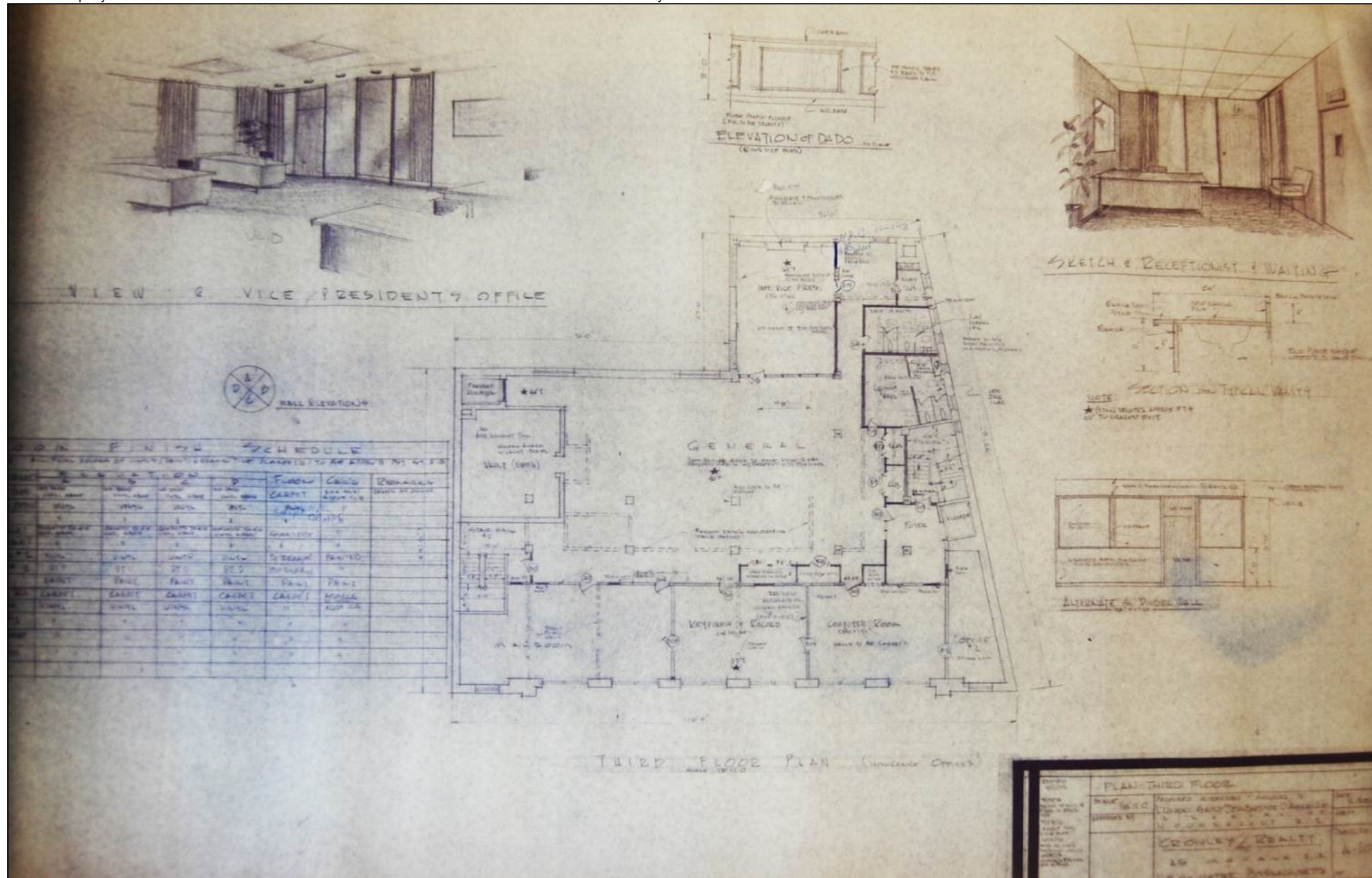
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1975 Second Floor Plan (source: Crowley Realty 1975).

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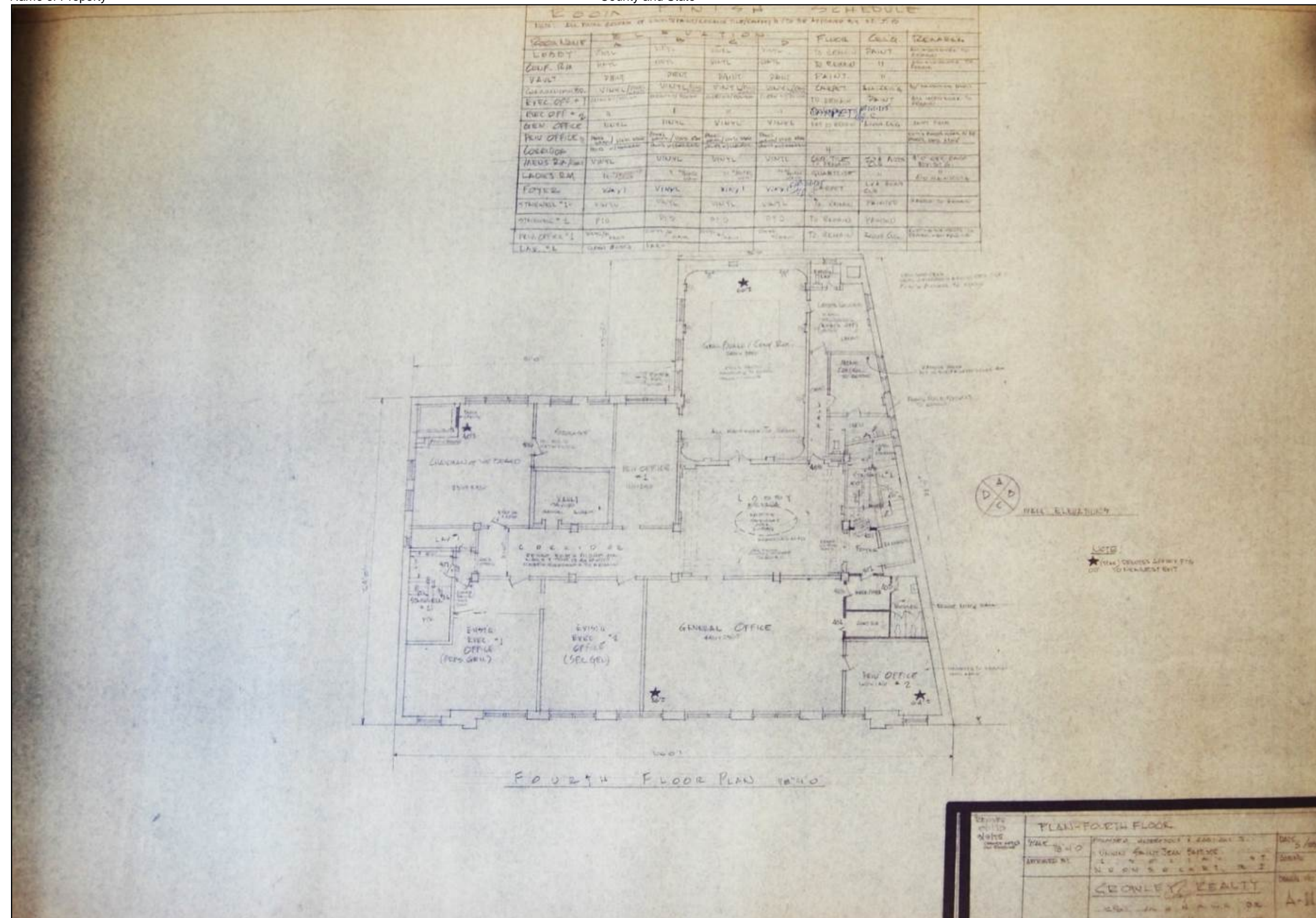
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1975 Third Floor Plan (source: Crowley Realty 1975).

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1975 Fourth Floor Plan (source: Crowley Realty 1975).

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WORRALL & FEDERAL STREET ELEVATIONS EXISTING CONDITIONS:

- EXISTING SOFFIT FRAMING AND PEASTONE FINISH IS IN POOR CONDITION. AREAS ARE DELAMINATING AND FALLING TO THE GROUND
- METAL LOUVERED GRATING IS ATTACHED TO THE EXISTING BRICK VENEER VIA LARGE BRACKETS BOLTED INTO THE BRICK FACE.
- EXISTING STEEL LINTELS OVER WINDOWS ARE RUSTED AND REQUIRE REFINISHING.
- WINDOW PERIMETER CAULKING HAS

SOCIAL STREET ELEVATION EXISTING CONDITIONS:

- EXISTING SOFFIT FRAMING AND PEASTONE FINISH IS IN POOR CONDITION. SOFFIT IS PULLING AWAY FROM LIMESTONE FAÇADE.
- THERE IS AN ORIGINAL DECORATIVE EMBOSSED STEEL FAÇADE WITH STONE INLAY AND CLERESTORY WINDOWS ENCAPSULATED WITHIN THE PEASTON SOFFIT FRAMING.
- BUILDING FAÇADE IS DIRTY AND NEEDS CLEANING
- EXISTING STEEL LINTELS OVER WINDOWS ARE RUSTED AND REQUIRE REFINISHING
- WINDOW PERIMETER CAULKING HAS FAILED AND REQUIRES REPLACEMENT.

EXISTING FEDERAL STREET ELEVATION

EXISTING WORRALL STREET ELEVATION

EXISTING SOCIAL STREET ELEVATION

1 SOCIAL STREET—INNOVATION PLAZA—EXISTING CONDITIONS

A- SECTION THRU EXISTING SOFFIT SOCIAL STREET

EXISTING PEASTONE SOFFIT OPENED REVEALING DECORATIVE STEEL EMBOSSED CORNICE W/ DENTAL MOULDING AND COPPER GUTTER AND DOWNSPOUT

EXISTING PEASTONE SOFFIT OPENED REVEALING DECORATIVE STEEL EMBOSSED ARCH AND TRIM WITH SOAPSTONE INLAY

EXISTING PEASTONE PILASTER BASE OPENED REVEALING EXISTING DECORATIVE EMBOSSED STEEL TRIM PLATING WITH SOAPSTONE INLAY

AHARONIAN & ASSOCIATES, INC. ARCHITECTS
 401-232-3010
 www.aah-inc.com

CITY OF WOONSOCKET, RI INCORPORATED 1848

Existing Conditions north (facade) elevation (source: Aharonian & Associates Inc. 2017).

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
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Detail photograph of the stamped sheet metal storefront beneath the pea stone soffit on the facade (Source: Aharonian & Associates Inc. 2017).



Detail of transom covered by pea stone soffit on facade and drop ceiling on interior of first floor (source: Aharonian & Associates Inc. 2017).

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
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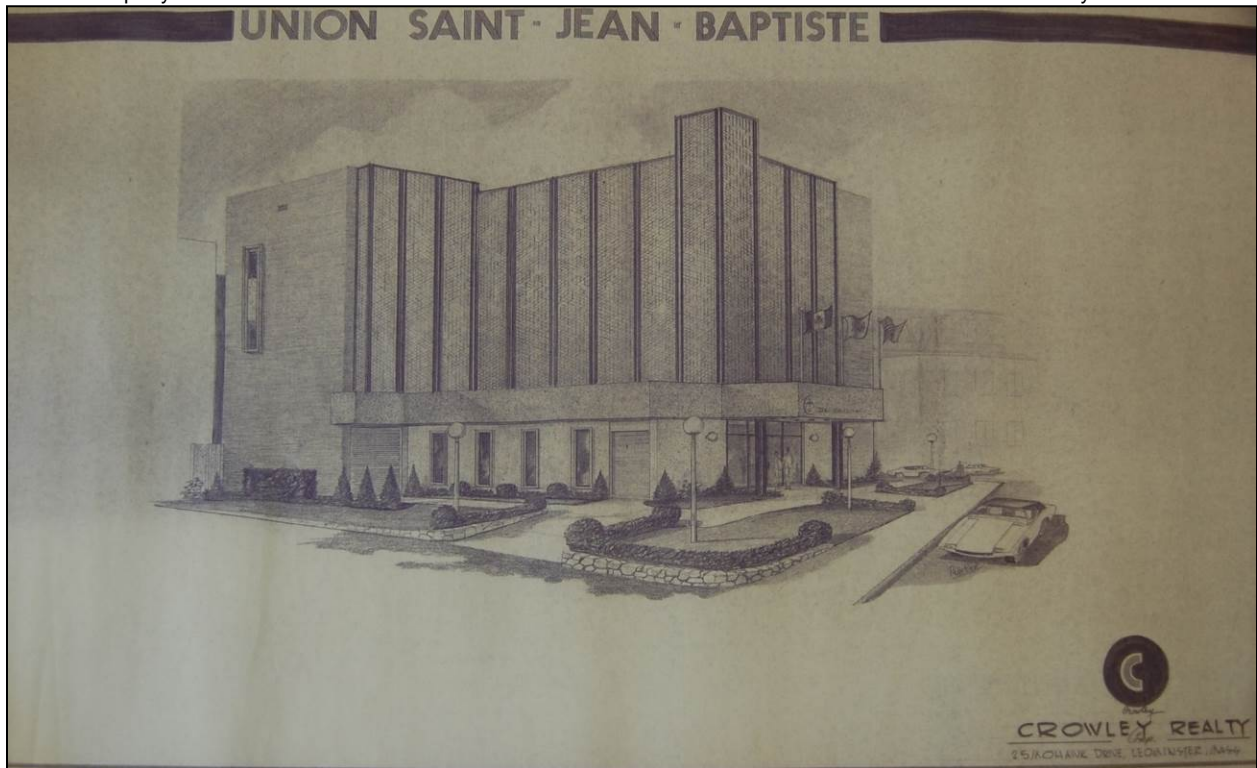
Undated photograph of the facade, looking southwest (source: Assumption College).



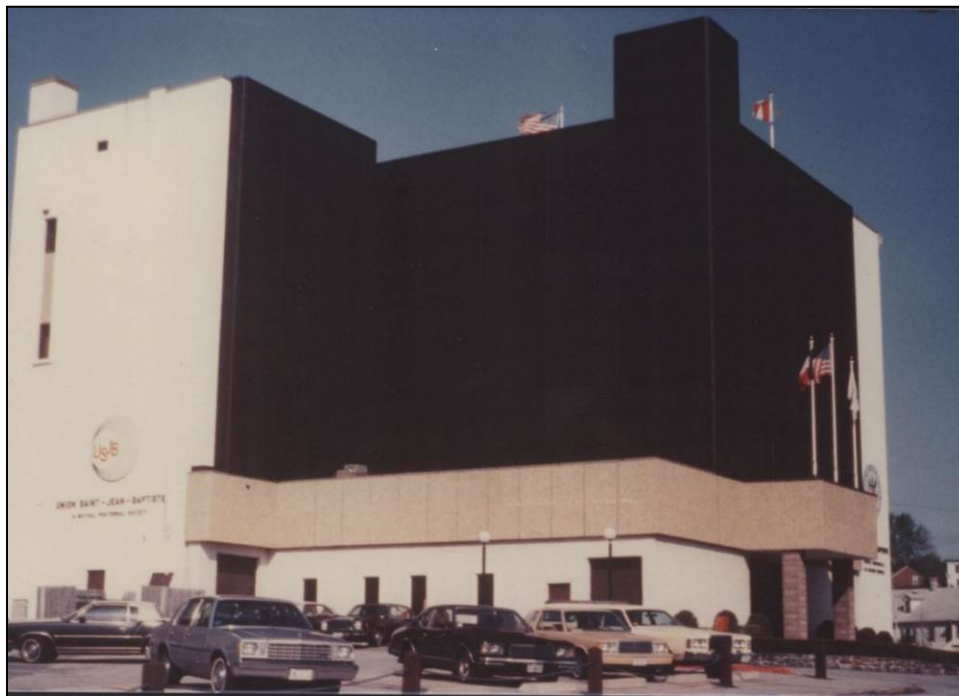
Undated photograph of rear of building prior to demolition of buildings on right and widening of street, looking northwest (source: Assumption College).

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1975 rendering of southeast and northeast elevations (source: Crowley Realty 1975).



Ca. 1975 photograph of the south and east elevations, looking northwest (source: Assumption College).

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Ca. 1976 photograph of the facade, looking south (source: Assumption College).

L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
Name of Property

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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.

Photo Log

Name of Property: L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique Building

City or Vicinity: Woonsocket

County: Providence

State: Rhode Island

Photographer: Melissa J. Andrade and Quinn R. Stuart

Date Photographed: February 8, 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- | | |
|-----------------|--|
| Photo 1 of 21. | The USJB building (west) facade and north elevation, looking south. |
| Photo 2 of 21. | Facade of the USJB building, looking east. |
| Photo 3 of 21. | Detail of the facade, looking southeast. |
| Photo 4 of 21. | Detail of the cornice on the facade, looking southeast. |
| Photo 5 of 21. | North and east elevations, looking west. |
| Photo 6 of 21. | Metal grill system removed on east elevation, looking north on second story. |
| Photo 7 of 21. | Original double-hung window on second floor, looking north. |
| Photo 8 of 21. | Original casement window on third floor, looking east. |
| Photo 9 of 21. | Main staircase between first and second floor, looking southeast. |
| Photo 10 of 21. | Main staircase between third and fourth floors, looking northwest. |
| Photo 11 of 21. | Vault on fourth floor, looking east. |
| Photo 12 of 21. | Cafeteria space on basement level, looking northwest. |
| Photo 13 of 21. | Main lobby in south end of building on the first floor, looking northeast. |
| Photo 14 of 21. | Detail of main lobby ceiling, looking west. |
| Photo 15 of 21. | Second floor corridor, looking south. |
| Photo 16 of 21. | Second floor office space, looking northwest. |
| Photo 17 of 21. | Mallet Library on third floor, looking southwest. |
| Photo 18 of 21. | Main lobby on the fourth floor, looking southwest. |
| Photo 19 of 21. | Ceiling and stained-glass oculus on the fourth floor, looking southeast. |
| Photo 20 of 21. | Bureau General meeting room on fourth floor, looking northeast. |
| Photo 21 of 21. | Office space on fourth floor, looking northeast. |

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.



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L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
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L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
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Photo 3 of 21



L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
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Photo 4 of 21



L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
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L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
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L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
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L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amérique
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L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
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L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique
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Photo 21 of 21

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: L'Union Saint Jean-Baptist d' Amerique

Multiple Name:

State & County: RHODE ISLAND, Providence

Date Received: 1/24/2018 Date of Pending List: 2/26/2018 Date of 16th Day: 3/13/2018 Date of 45th Day: 3/12/2018 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100002194

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

<input type="checkbox"/> Appeal	<input type="checkbox"/> PDIL	<input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue
<input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape	<input type="checkbox"/> Photo
<input type="checkbox"/> Waiver	<input type="checkbox"/> National	<input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary
<input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission	<input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource	<input type="checkbox"/> Period
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other	<input type="checkbox"/> TCP	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years
	<input type="checkbox"/> CLG	

Accept Return Reject 3/12/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The L'Union Saint Jean-Baptist d'Amerique building is significant at the statewide (regional) and local levels under National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of Social History, Ethnic Heritage-Other (French-Canadian) and Architecture. Completed in 1926, the LSJB building is an L-shaped, brick building designed in the Classical Revival style with a decorative limestone facade treatment. The work of prolific local master architect Walter F. Fontaine, the building is a locally significant example of early-twentieth century commercial design in Woonsocket. The building served as the home office of the L'Union Saint Jean-Baptist d'Amerique, an extremely significant beneficial and fraternal organization for French Canadian Catholics, one of only two such nationwide organizations in the U.S. With a peak membership of 78,280 in 1954, the organization was an important catalyst for the promotion and protection of French-Canadian heritage in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, particularly for New England's French-Canadian immigrants.

Recommendation/ Criteria: Accept NR Criteria A and C.

Reviewer: Paul Lusignan

Discipline: Historian

Telephone: (202)354-2229

Date: 3/12/2018

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : **Yes**



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



January 19, 2018

Mr. J. Paul Loether
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
Mail Stop 7228
1849 C St, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Mr. Loether:

The enclosed disc contains the true and correct copy of the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the **L'Union Saint Jean-Baptiste d'Amerique** at 1 Social Street in Woonsocket, 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

enclosure