

PH 0359068

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAY 4 1976
DATE ENTERED JUL 1 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

* Harris Warehouse

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 61 Railroad Street

CITY, TOWN

Woonsocket

---NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF #1 Hon. Fernand J. St. Germain

STATE

Rhode Island

CODE

44

COUNTY

Providence

CODE

007

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Cayer Construction Company

STREET & NUMBER

61 Railroad Street

CITY, TOWN

Woonsocket

VICINITY OF

STATE

Rhode Island

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

City Clerk's office - City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

69 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Woonsocket

STATE

Rhode Island

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Woonsocket, Rhode Island Statewide Preservation Report P-W-1

DATE

1976

---FEDERAL STATE ---COUNTY ---LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

CITY, TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Harris Warehouse stands on a gently sloping site surrounded by parking lots in a section of Woonsocket characterized by a mix of commercial and industrial land uses. The warehouse rises abruptly from the sidewalk edge and faces south to Railroad Street and, across the street, to the Providence & Worcester tracks. Rising north of Railroad Street and the warehouse is Cato Hill, a mid-nineteenth century working class residential neighborhood which is also being nominated to the Register.

The masonry walls of the warehouse are laid up in stuccoed stone rubble approximately two feet thick. The slate roof is a simple two-pitch gable, and the dentilated cornices are brick. The building has a full basement and stands 3½-stories tall above grade. Its most unusual feature is its form. It is arc-shaped or, more precisely, in plan it is a sector of an annulus, with a central angle of about 23° and radii of 200 and 244 feet. This curved form repeats the line of a railroad spur (now gone) which ran into the building; the spur was designed for a maximum speed of approximately ten miles per hour.

Fenestration is irregular on all elevations save the rear (north) face; the original 12/12 double hung sash remain in some window openings, but many openings are boarded up. Most windows on the east and west elevations are in the third story. Entrances to the building are on the south facade. Here, at the ground level, are a small personnel doorway, and a large roundheaded archway with brick voissoirs, fifteen feet high and fourteen feet wide, designed as the railroad freight car entrance. The archway is now partially filled in and has been fitted with a modern, roll-up, garage-type paneled door. Above the personnel entrance at the second and third story levels are small freight doors, and over a garret window was a projected beam to which tackle was fastened. The only other entrance is a wide basement-level opening on the east side, now filled in and only two feet in the clear above grade.*

The warehouse is approximately seventy-four feet long and forty-four feet wide, with 3600 square feet of floor space on each level. Interior spaces were apparently left open originally, and the only major usurpation of available space was a simple, winding staircase located in the southeast corner. As befits a warehouse, the interior was very plain. The walls were plastered over and whitewashed, the floors were thick plank, and the ceilings were nothing more than the exposed undersurface of the floor above. The heavy post and beam wood frame supporting the floors is divided into nine structural bays along the longitudinal axis of the building and is secured laterally by tie rods and tie plates running through the masonry walls.

*The purpose of this opening is presently unknown; it may have been created when part of the building was used for coal storage.

(See Continuation Sheet 1)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAY 4 1976
DATE ENTERED	JUL 1 1976

CONTINUATION SHEET 1

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The interior has been altered in the twentieth century. A brick chimney stack against the rear wall was closed up, the ground floor was subdivided with wood partitions, and a freight elevator was installed at the south end of the building. Basic electrical service, plumbing, and heating were also introduced before the Second World War. Presently, the warehouse is being converted for office and shop use by the Cayer Construction Company. Cayer created offices on the second floor, installed improved systems and added a fire escape at the rear of the building. In making these changes the owners have respected the character of the structure, preserving original materials and finish wherever possible.

The Harris Warehouse has suffered from past neglect and, though basically in sound condition, needs considerable repair to put it back into prime condition. However, the alterations which have been made over the years are either of minor importance or could easily be removed at some future date.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1855

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Harris Warehouse is significant both locally and at the state level to the history of transportation, industry, engineering and architecture. Edward Harris, Woonsocket's premier industrialist, erected the building in 1855 to handle freight for his woolen mills. According to a contemporary newspaper account, a railroad spur led into the building so that cars could discharge their freight from inside. The curved form of this rugged, utilitarian structure was dictated by the configuration of the rail spur, and its straight-forward construction, combining masonry walls and heavy timber framing, was designed to respond to the need for great load-bearing capacity and fire safety. No building better expresses the aphorism, "form follows function."

Using \$2,500 he had saved and another \$1,000 he borrowed, Harris came to Woonsocket in 1831 to open a small satinet manufacturing operation in rented factory space. By 1850 his woolen goods were known throughout the country for their high quality, and he was the wealthiest man in town. His production was worth \$275,000 annually and he employed 340 hands in several mills. Harris was Woonsocket's leading citizen, active in local business and civic affairs as well as state politics, where he was identified with the anti-slavery movement. He had a keen interest in the development of the community and promoted it in a public-spirited fashion by donating land for a high school, promoting the establishment of the first free library in the state, and erecting an imposing block containing stores, a lecture hall and school (which later housed the library), which he gave to a board of trustees to administer for the benefit of the people of Woonsocket.

First and foremost, however, Edward Harris was an industrial entrepreneur, and no well preserved building better reflects Harris' activities as a mill owner than the warehouse on Railroad Street. It is a unique example of a mid-nineteenth century storage facility specifically designed to link a manufacturing operation with the most efficient transportation system available.

(See Continuation Sheet 2)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Chase, David W. Woonsocket, Rhode Island -- Statewide Historic Preservation Report P-W-1. Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, 1976.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	9	2	9	1	7	2	0	4	6	5	3	0	3	0
ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING							

⁰⁶⁰ B

ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING							

C

ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING							

 D

ZONE			EASTING				NORTHING							

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

David Chase, Chief of Field Services

ORGANIZATION

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission April 20, 1976

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

150 Benefit Street

TELEPHONE

401-277-2678

CITY OR TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

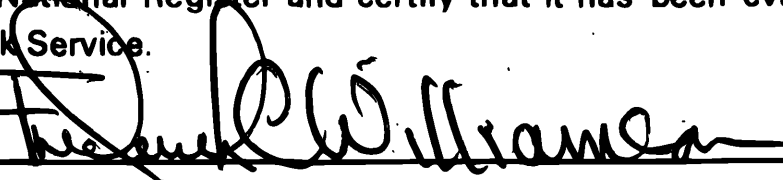
NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE




TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer


DATE April 30, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

 DATE 7/1/76

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:  DATE 6-28-76

CLERK, OFFICE OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
MAY 4 1976
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED JUL 1 1976

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET

2

ITEM NUMBER

8

PAGE

2

Before the railroad came, most freight was carried to and from Woonsocket in wagons, largely over old, unimproved highways, and the lack of better facilities deterred the expansion of industry. The Blackstone Canal, which opened in 1828 and linked Woonsocket to Providence and Worcester, promised great improvements. It never became a major carrier, however, because of conflicts over water rights which embroiled the canal operators with the owners of water-powered mills along its route. As a result, new efforts were made during the 1830's to improve transportation; a series of proposals developed for constructing privately funded turnpikes, but none were ever built. By the late '30's plans were being formulated for a rail line linking Worcester and Providence, with Woonsocket as the major intermediate stop, and finally, in 1847, the Providence and Worcester Railroad opened. 1847 marks a significant developmental threshold for Woonsocket, for from that date onward industrial expansion could continue assured of abundant and reliable transportation for the raw materials required in local factories (cotton, wool and, later, coal), and assured as well of a wide and accessible market.

Woonsocket was Rhode Island's third largest industrial center by 1850, and the only one of the three without a port. Maintaining this position of importance depended upon the railroad. More than any other structure, the Harris Warehouse demonstrates the critical bond between the city's industrial economy and rail transport.