

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED DEC 12 1978

**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 Rhodes-on-the Pawtuxet Ballroom and Gazebo

AND/OR COMMON "Rhodes"

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER Rhodes Place

CITY, TOWN Cranston VICINITY OF 2 Rep. Edward P. Beard

STATE Rhode Island CODE 44 COUNTY Providence CODE 007

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Rhodes-on-the Pawtuxet, Inc. c/o Rhodes Corporation	Scottish Rite Cathedral, Inc. c/o Mr. Harry Crocker
STREET & NUMBER 60 Rhodes Place	2115 Broad St 121 Dorrance Street
CITY, TOWN Cranston, RI 02905	STATE R.I. 02905 VICINITY OF Providence, R.I. 02903

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Cranston City Hall

STREET & NUMBER 869 Park Avenue

CITY, TOWN Cranston STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Pawtuxet Village; Statewide Preservation Report PK-P-1

DATE 1973 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

CITY, TOWN Providence STATE Rhode Island

See continuation sheet 1

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 Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet Ballroom (1915) and Gazebo (c. 1880) are the only extant buildings of what was formerly a small but active complex of recreational and social facilities located just north of Pawtuxet Village on the north bank of the Pawtuxet River in Cranston. Begun in 1872, when Thomas H. Rhodes built a pavilion for serving clambakes and renting boats along the riverside, "Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet," as the operation was soon known, quickly expanded to include facilities for dancing, rowing, and canoeing as well. All except one of these buildings, the Stateroom (c. 1890), were destroyed by fire on February 12, 1915. The Ballroom was built immediately after the 1915 fire and opened to the Public on August 14th of that year. The Stateroom itself burned to the ground in July, 1977.

The Gazebo, at the southwest corner of Rhodes Place and Broad Street, served as the visual and historic entry point for the Rhodes complex. It is a one-story, gable-roofed, frame structure built in the late 1870's or early 1880's as a "waiting room" for horse-drawn streetcars bearing merrymakers traveling from Providence to enjoy the resort facilities of Pawtuxet and residents traveling from Pawtuxet to work in Providence. The Gazebo retains much of its original simple Queen Anne detailing, including scrolled brackets, heavy turned corner posts, and open railings. Because of its prominent location and architectural charm, it has long been a local landmark. It is today used as a bus stop, but may be relocated elsewhere in Pawtuxet Village in the near future. The recently constructed Scottish Rite Temple (1976) closely crowds the Gazebo on the north and visually overpowers the small frame structure.

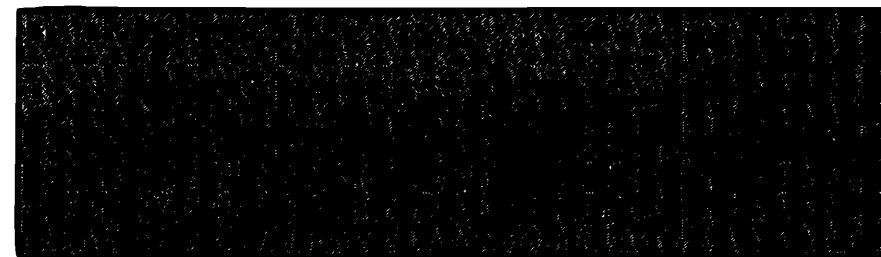
The Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet Ballroom, located on approximately five acres of land sloping westerly toward the river, stands at the west end of Rhodes Place. It was designed by architects John F. O'Malley and Henry F. Lewis in what contemporary accounts termed a "modernized Renaissance" style.¹ It is a large, relatively plain, hip-roofed structure, with a central projecting cross-bay flanked by flat-roofed, splayed side bays, and embellished with classical ornamental motifs. The main entrance is through a central two-story tetrastyle pedimented portico supported by four Ionic columns and crowned by a statue of Terpsichore, the Muse of the Dance. A low-relief plaster frieze depicting "The Spirit of the Dance" adorned the entablature until its removal in the 1970's. Shallow pilasters define the bays of the facade, which terminate in projecting units.

¹"The New Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet," Providence Board of Trade Journal, September, 1915, V. 27, no. 9.

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The structure is of heavy wood framing covered with concrete stucco designed to be "fireproof," and was originally provided with an automatic sprinkler system. Classical motifs in wood and copper, and simple sawn brackets supporting the wide roof overhang at either side are the building's chief ornamentation in addition to the entry portico.

Diamond-paned windows arranged with glazed casements under fixed glazed panels, containing rippled opaque glass, have, to some extent, been replaced as a result of vandalism. The original exterior colors of buff with chocolate trim and sky blue accent of the portico ceiling have been retained. The interior of the Ballroom retains its original detailing and has been freshly painted white.

The Ballroom building was designed to include a two-story public dance area (with a dance floor accommodating 1,000) above a cement basement equipped with a canoe livery capable of housing 750 boats as well as the quarters of the Swastika Canoe Club. The only major exterior alteration to the building has been the filling-in of fifteen canoe bays on the west river-front.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

NOX
 10 2170
 9/20/15

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1880 - 1915 BUILDER/ARCHITECT John F. O'Malley and Henry F. Weeks

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The development of Rhodes-on-the-Pawtuxet reflects clearly a number of factors which shaped Pawtuxet's history in the closing decades of the nineteenth century: the substitution of recreation-based industries for the earlier textile and shipbuilding industries, which were in decline by this time, and the growth of transportation systems which linked Providence with outlying areas and facilitated suburban residential development in the Village.

With the burning of the second C. and W. Manufacturing Company mill in 1875 and the failure of the Warwick Railroad in 1876, the era of textiles, and of other industries dependent upon adequate shipping facilities, in Pawtuxet was over. Pawtuxet's natural advantages of pleasant locations and water access (the Pawtuxet River and the Pawtuxet Cove) soon led to the development of recreation as an industry there.

Even before this, Thomas H. Rhodes, a member of the Rhodes family who initiated Pawtuxet's textile industry, recognized Pawtuxet's recreation when he opened his modest one-story frame pavilion for clambakes and flat-bottom boat rentals in 1872. His sons -- Edward S., Arthur A., and Thomas H., Jr., who inherited the business following Thomas Sr.'s death in 1898 -- urged him to expand the facilities to include dancing, which he did with reluctance, fearing that Pawtuxet might be too distant from Providence to attract dance patrons. This was not the case, and various alterations and expansions of the original building were necessitated by the increasing volume of business. Finally in 1898, the newly-incorporated Rhodes Brothers enlarged the grounds and built a new Casino for dancing. A second new and larger Casino was built in 1901, the earlier one having already been outgrown.

Boating activities on the river became increasingly popular; canoes soon replaced the old flat-bottomed skiffs and by 1907 three canoe clubs had built their boat houses along the river nearby, the Swastika, the Pawtuxet, and the Saskatchewan. Later the Matapan, the Chattanooga, the Cayuga, and the Ilkiyma clubs located there as well. A photograph caption in the Providence Board of Trade Journal issued in August, 1914 (Volume 26, number 8) stated that, "Next to the Charles River in Boston, it is quite probable that there are more canoes on the Pawtuxet than

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any other American river of comparable size." Canoe competitions of all sorts centered around the Rhodes facilities. Canoeist Edward Diesel once used Rhodes as a starting point for a (successful) canoe trip to the St. Lawrence.² More locally-oriented enthusiasts would canoe east along the river to Pawtuxet Falls where there was a walkway for portage, then continue under the bridge to the Pawtuxet Cove, where they might continue by sail to Crescent Park on the east side of Narragansett Bay in Riverside. The popularity of canoeing peaked about 1929, declining steadily thereafter as the automobile gained ascendance, until the last club house burned in 1941.

Rhodes became a center for social as well as recreational activities. Thomas Rhodes' earliest clambakes were generally given for business or social groups; this tradition of use for organizational functions continues to the present day. The Rhodes Ballroom (and stateroom) housed balls, dances, political dinners, flower and dog shows, antique shows and auctions, among other activities. Rhodes provided one of the earliest public dance facilities in New England.³ dancing, started by the early 1890's, continued hardly missing a step when the fire of February, 1915, spread from a canoe house to engulf most of the Rhodes complex. The new, and present, Ballroom opened to the public a scant five months later on August 14, 1915, as the "Palais de Dance" (sic), with 10,000 in attendance. Admission cost 15¢ and attendants were resplendent in white trousers and blue coats with a gold "R" on the lapel. Dancing contests were held once a week; the price² was a week's engagement at Keith's Theatre in downtown Providence.

From the 1920's until about 1945 the Shrine Circus was held here before moving to Narragansett Race Track. The Big Show, complete with elephants, filled the Ballroom; a carnival and side show in tents filled the upper parking lot; and elsewhere on the grounds, balloon ascensions and men shot from cannons delighted the public. Another noteworthy Rhodes event was Cranston's first Inaugural Ball, held there in 1925, when Arthur Rhodes was the Mayor of Cranston.

²Gladys W. Brayton, Other Ways and Other Days, p. 161.

³See the Providence Board of Trade Journal, September, 1915 (Volume 27, number 9, p. 604) and July, 1925 (Volume 36, number 7, p. 314).

See continuation sheet 4

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Brayton, Gladys W. Other Ways and Other Days. Globe Printing Company, East Providence, R.I., 1976, pp. 160-162.

Kennedy, Hazel Wade. A Guide to Historic Pawtuxet. Oxford Press, Inc. Providence, R.I., 1972, reprinted 1975, p. 16 & 18.

See continuation sheet 6

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 5 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,9	30,11,4,0	4,62,615,4,0	B	1,9	30,08,6,0	4,62,64,6,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

That portion of Plat 1 Lot 7 which lies beneath the Gazebo, near the southwest corner of Rhodes Place and Broad Street. Also, all of Plat 1, Lot 300.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Ancelin V. Lynch, National Register Coordinator

ORGANIZATION	DATE
Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission	April, 1978
STREET & NUMBER	TELEPHONE
150 Benefit Street	(401) 277-2678
CITY OR TOWN	STATE

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

David C. Williams

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE June 21, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

ATTEST:

Bill LeDonich
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

12/12/78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

12/11/78

