

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH 0688959

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED NOV 1 1978
DATE ENTERED DEC 15 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

Art's Auto

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

5-7 Lonsdale Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Pawtucket

VICINITY OF

#1 Hon. Fernand J. StGermain

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Rhode Island

CODE

44

COUNTY

Providence

CODE

007

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Pawtucket Redevelopment Agency

STREET & NUMBER

200 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Pawtucket

VICINITY OF

STATE

Rhode Island

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Pawtucket City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

137 Roosevelt Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Pawtucket

STATE

Rhode Island

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Rhode Island Statewide Survey--Pawtucket Survey

DATE

1975-78

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

Art's Auto is a one-story, flat-roofed, early twentieth-century brick service station with steeply pitched, peaked roofs capping the tower and piers which accent its fanciful facade. It stands on a paved triangular lot with small, dusty, weed-covered patches of earth to the left and rear (northwest and northeast) of the building. It is located at the busy intersection of Randall, Thurston, and Main Streets and Lonsdale Avenue (State Route 122) in a neighborhood containing a variety of residential, industrial, and commercial structures, all dating from the late nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century. The building is approximately thirty-two feet wide and forty feet deep and is divided externally and internally into two sections.

The front section of the building, with its fantastic exterior, contrasts dramatically with the starkly functional rear section, and gives Art's Auto the unique architectural character for which the structure is noted. This section, measuring approximately thirty-two by fourteen feet, was originally an office and a product display and sales area, but is now used for office and storage purposes. Outside, it is demarcated by four square, turret-like corner piers, each capped by a pyramidal roof with an over-scaled ball finial at the apex. In the center of the facade (southwest side) is a circular tower with a ten-sided conical roof topped by a larger-scale ball finial. These roofs, surfaced with what appear to be asbestos shingles, have convex-curved "tiles" along their ridges, a feature which adds to the sculptural quality and geometric complexity of the roof forms. In addition, sloping, asbestos-shingled panels run between the piers and the tower on three sides of the front section, forming a false mansard roof which is a precursor of the tack-on pseudo-mansards commonly used on present-day storefronts and commercial buildings.

The wall surface of the front section is composed almost entirely of a wooden framework designed to hold large plate-glass display windows, doors, and multi-paned transoms. Two doorways, one at each end of the facade, still exist, as do the transoms, but much of the display-window area has now been boarded up with plywood. Inside, the front section is divided into two rooms with wood floors, wood-sheathed walls, and wood panel-and-batten ceilings, while doorways in the partition separating the front and rear permit access between the two sections.

The rear section, totally devoid of architectural ornamentation, is a hard-edged rectilinear mass with a wood fascia board running along the top of the wall, over which the metal roof flashing has been bent down and fastened. This portion of the building, measuring about thirty-two by twenty-six feet, was originally and is still used for

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servicing automobiles. An overhead garage door at the rear of the southeast side of the building provides access to a single, concrete-floored service bay, while the remainder of this section contains a wood-floored storage area and men's and women's rest rooms (the former entered from the storage area and the latter from the front section of the building). Windows in the rear section are the multi-paned, metal-framed type commonly found in early twentieth-century industrial and commercial buildings, except for those in the rest rooms, which have wood-framed double-hung sash.

Though it still retains its picturesque quality, Art's Auto is in very run-down condition. It was slated for demolition after its acquisition by the Pawtucket Redevelopment Agency, but over the past year the Agency has come to understand and appreciate the historical significance of the structure. Consequently, the PRA is now trying to preserve the building and has recently advertised it in hope of finding someone who will rehabilitate it.

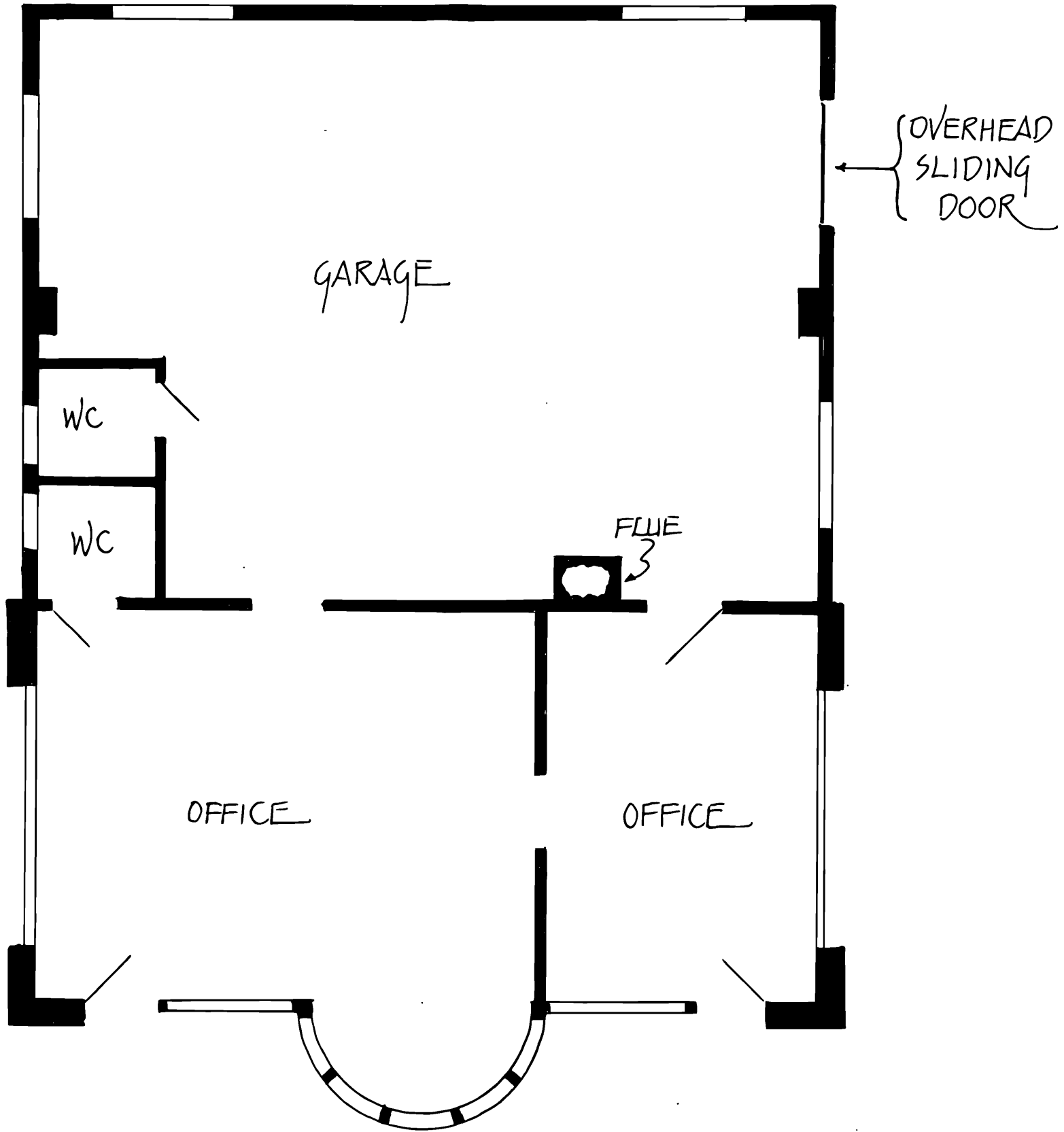
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ART'S AUTO
5-7 LONSDALE AVENUE
PAWTUCKET, RHODE ISLAND
SKETCH PLAN ~ NOT TO SCALE

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to create a lively, striking visual effect. The exaggeration of the roofs, with their bulging ridges and bulbous finials, gives the station a whimsical quality reminiscent of the character of pavilions at fairs or amusement parks. The use of such imagery is probably not uncalculated; the original owner of Art's Auto undoubtedly hoped to capitalize on peoples' positive feelings for places of amusement by employing a design which suggested to the viewer that this was a fun place to buy gas, oil, and tires.

A relatively small number of these exotic or novelty service stations now exist in this country, making the survivors rare artifacts of early twentieth-century American culture. They serve as testimonials to an important period in our history: the beginning of America's transition into the highly mobile, automobile-oriented society it is today, with the attendant development of new building forms and innovative approaches to marketing necessitated by that transformation. Together with Gilbane's (also in Pawtucket), Art's Auto is one of the two early twentieth-century service stations in Rhode Island discovered to date which best typify this significant phase in the history of American commerce and commercial architecture.

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 type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1927-1928

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Built in 1927-1928 for Arthur J. Normand, Art's Auto is one of the most interesting and best preserved early twentieth-century service stations in Rhode Island. It is among the surprisingly few notable survivors of its period, and is a significant relic of a distinct and important phase in the history of American commerce and the evolution of service-station design in the United States.

Gas stations first became a unique commercial building type around 1910, and the earliest ones were utilitarian structures exhibiting little or no architectural elaboration. Between 1915 and 1920, standardized, professionally designed stations, employing forms borrowed from domestic bungalows or Prairie School houses, were first used by regional and national oil companies to create corporate images readily identifiable by the public. Though the stylistic imagery of such stations has changed repeatedly to suit popular values or fashions in each decade, the basic purposes and principles of standardization have remained the same, and the approach has continued to regulate the building programs of the major oil companies to this day.

During the 1920s, however, the growing availability and burgeoning popularity of the automobile led to intense competition among oil companies and independent gasoline dealers, a factor which contributed in part to a unique phase in station design. A number of firms and individuals used exotic styles or novelty structures in an attempt to produce eye-catching buildings which would rivet the attention of passing motorists. This approach was the antithesis of standardization, which sought to attract consumers by establishing an image of familiarity and reliability through uniformity. Bizarre design was thus an alternate marketing technique used by entrepreneurs to promote themselves and their products.

Art's Auto illustrates the individualistic approach to station design. The architectural treatment of the front section of the building transcends strictly functional considerations, and piers, tower, and varied roof forms have been incorporated into the structure

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Material on Art's Auto compiled by Stephen J. Roper and David Chase for presentation to Rhode Island Review Board 27 March 1977, recorded in files of Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission. "Place, Product, Packaging," catalog of an exhibition on the design of fast-food restaurants, diners, gasoline stations, and museum-village restorations, held at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York, 20 January-19 March 1978.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,9	3,0,0	9,0,0	4,6	3,7	7,7,0	B					
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING	
C							D					

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property is coextensive with lot 618 in plat 56B, as designated in the records of the Tax Assessor's Office of the City of Pawtucket.

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

Robert O. Jones, Jr., Historic Preservation Planner

ORGANIZATION

R. I. Historical Preservation Commission

DATE

September, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

150 Benefit Street

TELEPHONE

401-277-2678

CITY OR TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island 02903

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

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

Robert O. Jones, Jr.

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE October 23, 1978

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Charles A. ...

~~DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION~~

DATE 12-15-78

~~KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER~~

DATE 12/14/78

ATTEST: *Ann ...*
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER