

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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NAME: Pawtucket Elks Lodge Building
LOCATION: 27 Exchange Street
OWNER: Pawtucket Lodge No. 920, Benevolent and Protective Order of
Elks of the U.S.A.
27 Exchange Street
Pawtucket, Rhode Island

CONDITION: Good; Altered; Original site

DESCRIPTION:

The Pawtucket Elks Lodge Building, a striking 1926 building in the Spanish Renaissance Revival style, occupies the southwesterly corner of Exchange and Montgomery Streets on the westerly edge of Pawtucket's downtown. Adjoining it to the south is the 1895, five-story Pawtucket Times Building--together, these two downtown buildings constitute one of the most effective sections of urban streetscape remaining in Pawtucket.

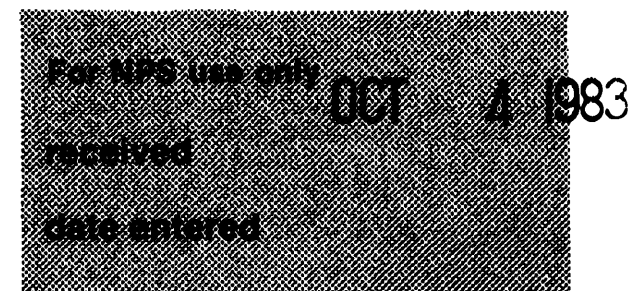
The Pawtucket Elks Lodge Building is a three-story structure of irregular form, handsomely detailed in an almost mannered interpretation of the Spanish Renaissance Revival. Its facade, which is placed directly upon the sidewalk in a properly urban manner, is wrapped adroitly around the shaved-off, Exchange-Montgomery Street corner, creating three distinct facade planes. A slightly projecting hip-roofed tower at the western end of the Exchange Street facade contains the major entrance to the upper floor lodge rooms; the tower's added height also softens the otherwise abrupt transition to the five-story Times Building next door. The facade walls are faced with buff tapestry brick laid in Flemish bond; this is accented by extensive cast-stone detail of slightly paler hue. Visible roof slopes (of very slight pitch, except for the hip-roof of the tower) are covered with dull red tile.

The building's wrap-around facade is divided into four bays (in addition to the entry bay in the base of the end tower) fronting Exchange Street, two narrower bays facing the Exchange-Montgomery Street intersection, and two full-size bays facing onto Montgomery Street. The first-floor level of each of these bays is treated as an open, glazed storefront within a rusticated, cast-stone enframingent. All of these storefronts (excepting their signs) appear to be original. At the second-floor level, a floor-length window in a rusticated cast-stone enframingent capped by a projecting pediment is centered in each bay. Narrow windows without enframingents flank each of the major windows. Balconies, each lined with wrought iron railings and supported by a single, massive console, are linked by a molded stringcourse to form a continuous, undulating

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line along the building's facade. Another, broader belt course with a running foliate design marks the level of the third floor. This uppermost story is developed as a glazed loggia under broad, bracketed eaves. The facade of the tower bay varies this formula: the flanking windows are dropped on the second floor and an exaggerated console, springing through the broken, segmentally-arched pediment of the window head, carries a small, semicircular balcony for a single third-floor window. A corbeled cornice carries the main eaves line across the tower; above this cornice is placed the bronze figure of an elk's head.

The interiors of the ground-floor shops have all been modernized to varying degrees, and the building's basement has been converted into the Lodge's bar. The Lodge hall and offices on the upper two stories, however, have been very little altered. The hall is a large two-story space with windows only on the eastern side; the Elks' offices, conference rooms, and lounges occupy the initial tier of space behind the Exchange and Montgomery Street facade at both second- and third-floor levels. The detailing throughout these spaces appears to be largely original and follows the Spanish Renaissance theme. Roughly plastered walls and low beamed ceilings are used in the hallways and ancillary rooms; the open hall rises to a coffered ceiling visually supported by a series of great molded consoles.

PERIOD: 1900- ARCHITECT: John F. O'Malley
AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Commerce
SPECIFIC DATE: 1926

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Pawtucket Elks Lodge Building is architecturally significant as an unusual, and a well-preserved example of the Spanish Renaissance Revival Style of the early twentieth century as applied to a downtown lodge building. Moreover, the Elks Lodge forms, with the 1895 Pawtucket Times Building next door, one of the most impressive fragments of a truly urban streetscape remaining in Pawtucket.

The Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks--the parent body of America's local Elks' Lodges--was founded in New York City in 1868. One of that burgeoning array of nineteenth-century fraternal organizations, the B.P.O.E. was founded by--and was initially only open to--members of the acting profession. By the 1880s, the order was opened up to members of other professions, and thus was begun a period of steady growth. The primary ideals of the order are "Charity, Justice, Brotherly Love, and Fidelity," and the Elks have historically been known for their benevolence and their patriotism.

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Locally, the Pawtucket Lodge of Elks #920 was founded on June 10, 1904, with 64 charter members. The new lodge was one of perhaps a dozen or more fraternal organizations then active in the city. For the next ten years, the Elks held their meetings in rented halls; their first permanent home (on School Street) was purchased in 1914. The membership continued to increase steadily and, in 1924, plans were announced for the construction of a new Lodge building. The old wooden Briggs Block on the corner of Exchange and Montgomery Streets had been acquired; this building was razed and the present lodge building was erected on the site in 1926. The new structure was unique among Rhode Island Elks' Lodge buildings in that its first floor was designed to be (and still is) rented out as commercial space. The rental income produced by this space turned out to be a boon during the lean years of the Great Depression (a time of serious financial trouble for fraternal organizations nationwide) when the Pawtucket Lodge's membership dropped from around 1500 to approximately 500. The Pawtucket Elks eventually recovered and, by the early 1950s, the local lodge was reported to be the largest fraternal body (with almost 1300 members in 1954) in the Blackstone Valley area.

The membership of the Pawtucket Elks Lodge has historically included many of the area's most prominent politicians. The first "Exalted Ruler" of the Lodge, Attorney James H. Higgins, was Mayor of Pawtucket in the year the local lodge was founded; Higgins went on to serve as Governor of Rhode Island in 1906 and 1907. Another prominent early member was J. Howard McGrath, a Central Falls lawyer who would eventually become Governor, then U.S. Senator, and finally U.S. Attorney-General.

The 1926 lodge was designed by John F. O'Malley of the Providence architectural firm O'Malley & Fitzsimmons. Its distinctive cast-stone trim was produced by the Ciccone Cast Stone Company of Providence. Other Pawtucket buildings designed by this talented local architect include the Pawtucket City Hall (1933-35) and the Pawtucket West High School (1938-39)--both are included in this nomination and both share with the Elk's Lodge building O'Malley's characteristic use of cast-stone trim to enliven exterior walls of yellow brick. These strongly stylized and highly personal designs by O'Malley constitute some of Rhode Island's most striking early twentieth-century architecture.

The Times Square area (centered upon the upper block of Exchange Street) developed into a major commercial/entertainment node early in the present century. Although the neighborhood south and east of here (along Main, Broad and Mill Streets and East Avenue) had emerged as a full-blown central business district decades earlier, modern intrusions and alterations along these original downtown streets have largely erased any sense of an historic downtown streetscape here. On the

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upper end of Exchange Street, though, the Elks' Lodge and the adjacent Pawtucket Times building still preserve an image of the old-style, downtown shopping street--multi-story commercial blocks with historically detailed facades set cheek-by-jowl along the sidewalk to form an unbroken street facade.

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nominated property includes Pawtucket Assessor's Plat 43A, lot 453. The Elks' Lodge Building fills virtually the entire lot.

ACREAGE: less than one (8,541 square feet)

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

UTM: A 19 302000 4638940

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