

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

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

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Continuation sheet 62

Item number 7

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HISTORIC NAME: Rhode Island State Airport Terminal
COMMON NAME: U.S. Weather Service Office
LOCATION: 572 Occupasstuxet Road
OWNER: State of Rhode Island
Department of Transportation - Airport Division
Theodore Francis Green State Airport
Post Road
Warwick, RI

CONDITION: Good; Altered; Original Site

DESCRIPTION:

The original Terminal Building of the State Airport at Hillsgrove, now Theodore Francis Green State Airport, is located on a relatively isolated stretch of Occupasstuxet Road with a few other state-owned buildings, most associated with the airport, and a few commercial structures. It is a stucco-covered masonry structure composed of several flat-roofed, rectilinear blocks arranged symmetrically. A two-story central block with truncated front corners breaks forward from and rises above a one-story central mass flanked by slightly shorter one-story wings. A control tower, with a semi-hexagonal end facing the airfield to the south, connects to the rear (south) of the two-story block and rises slightly above it. The building's ornamentation is rather spare and severe, consisting of tubular steel railings around the roofs, stringcourse-like bands painted blue-green to contrast with the cream-colored stucco walls, and a main entrance bay defined by two-story, geometric, stepped, archivolt-like bands flanking a one-story recessed doorway and broken at the top by a band of windows. The entrance is further articulated with a stepped parapet mirroring the polygonal corners of the entrance banding and with slightly recessed vertical panels on either side of the entry tying together the first- and second-story windows. All windows and entrances are untrimmed, hard-edged punched openings filled with metal-framed sash and doors. The main entrance opens into a central hall with multi-color terazzo flooring in a geometric pattern. Offices open off this hall to the right, left, and straight ahead, and a staircase in a separate stair hall leads to more offices on the second floor. There are no notable interior decorative features; the original Vitrolite and chrome ticket counter, apparently the interior's chief embellishment, is now gone.

PERIODS: 1900-

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture, Commerce, Transportation

SPECIFIC DATES: 1932-33

ARCHITECT: Jackson, Robertson and Adams

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SIGNIFICANCE:

The original State Airport Terminal is a well preserved, evocative example of early modern architecture closely associated with important developments in transportation, commerce, and public works in early twentieth-century Rhode Island. This building is one of the earliest structures erected in the state which reflects the influence of the International style architects of the 1920s and the decorative principles of the Art Deco and Art Moderne styles. Its modernistic design, by the Providence firm Jackson, Robertson and Adams, is noteworthy for its use of a new aesthetic and formal vocabulary for an unusual program with no precedent in Rhode Island and few in other parts of the country. The design also complements the futuristic image that aviation had in its infancy, and reflects the optimistic attitude toward progress and technical achievement which characterized the 1920s and 1930s in general.

Historically, the establishment of the State Airport was the state's response to pressure from Providence-area businessmen, who felt that a publicly owned and operated airfield was necessary to attract national airlines to serve Providence, preventing the capital city from becoming an air-age backwater. The airport was eagerly sought by Warwick officials, who were convinced it would promote local commercial and industrial development. After its site was chosen in 1929, construction of the airfield was commenced and the state airport, the first state-owned airport in the United States, was dedicated on 26 September 1931. An indication of this opening's importance is given by the fact that a total of 150,000 spectators attended two inaugural air shows at the facility, the largest crowd known to attend any public event in Rhode Island up to that time, and perhaps the largest ever. The State Airport Terminal was begun in 1932 and opened in January 1933, the first structure built here by the state (private companies had constructed hangars earlier). Other structures have been added at the airport over the years, including a second terminal built in 1938 and altered in 1953, and the present (third) terminal on Post Road, opened in 1961. The original terminal at 572 Occupasstuxet Road has since been used for offices, among them the official U.S. Weather Service office for Providence. The first State Airport Terminal is an important symbol of the state's commitment to provide up-to-date public facilities which would promote modern commercial and industrial development in Rhode Island, and is a well designed landmark embodying the aspirations and sentiments of its era.

ACREAGE:

QUADRANGLE NAME: East Greenwich, R.I.

UTM: 19 297980 4622640

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BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION AND JUSTIFICATION:

The nominated property includes the portion of lot 4, City of Warwick Assessor's Plat 321, bounded by the rectangle described as follows: beginning at a point on the south curb of Occupasstuxet Road; thence southerly in a straight line, perpendicular to Occupasstuxet Road, a distance of 280 feet more or less, passing 20 feet east of the east end of the Terminal, to a point; thence westerly in a straight line, parallel to Occupasstuxet Road, a distance of 140 feet more or less, passing 30 feet south of the south side of the Terminal, to a point; thence northerly in a straight line, perpendicular to Occupasstuxet Road, a distance of 280 feet more or less, passing 20 feet west of the west end of the Terminal, to the south curb of Occupasstuxet Road; thence easterly along the south curb of Occupasstuxet Road 140 feet more or less, to the point of beginning. This parcel measures 39,200 square feet and encompasses the Terminal together with its immediate surroundings, including a sight line from Occupasstuxet Road to the Terminal and a pattern of radial pathways on the apron south of the Terminal which was part of the original design for the building and its environs.

LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: NATIONAL

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