

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

5.23.

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DATE ENTEREDNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME** *Elmwood Multiple Resource Area*HISTORIC Historic Resources of Elmwood:
Historic and Architectural Resources, Partial Inventory

AND/OR COMMON

*Elmwood Ave., Cranston and Broad Sts.***2 LOCATION** Bounded east by Broad Street, south by Interstate Route 95 and the
City line, west by the City line and State Route 10, and north by
STREET & NUMBER Westminister, Cranston, and Messer Streets

CITY, TOWN

Providence

VICINITY OF

Cong. Dist. #2 (Honorable Edward Beard)

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☐ MUSEUM☒ COMMERCIAL☒ PARK☒ EDUCATIONAL☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☒ RELIGIOUS☐ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER:

x Multiple Resource

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Multiple See enclosed owner's list and individual property entries

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Providence City Hall

STREET & NUMBER

25 Dorrance Street

CITY, TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island 02903

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, Statewide Historical
Preservation Report P-P-3, Elmwood Providence, 1978-1979.

DATE

1978-1979

☐ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

CITY, TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☒ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Elmwood is a large and irregularly shaped area located in the southwest corner of Providence. As defined jointly by the City of Providence and the Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission for purposes of the survey, the area contains the neighborhoods of Elmwood and West Elmwood, two nearby sections of the West Side, and the so-called Reservoir section surrounding Mashapaug Pond (see Survey Area Map). The bounds of the survey area follow Broad Street on the east, Interstate Route 95 and the Providence-Cranston city line on the south, the city line and State Route 10 on the west, and Westminster, Cranston, and Messer Streets on the north. The north boundary abuts the West Broadway neighborhood, most of which was nominated to the National Register as the Broadway-Armory Historic District.

The natural configuration of the land in Elmwood is presently that of a nearly level plain, pockmarked here and there with shallow dips. Much of the land was formerly low and swampy and a series of shallow ponds formed the most prominent landscape features (see 1849 and 1870 maps, Figures 1 and 2). Only the crescent-shaped, half-mile-long Mashapaug Pond survived the filling and levelling which occurred throughout the area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Long Pond, the largest body of water, formerly situated in the shallow hollow north of Potters Avenue through which Dexter and Bucklin Streets now pass, and extending in serpentine form from Cromwell Street south to Daboll Street, was filled in about 1890. The smaller Duck Pond, which occupied the greater part of the block bounded by Potters Avenue, Salem, Waldo, Dexter, and Sherry Streets in West Elmwood, was filled between 1882 and 1889. Benedict Pond, slightly smaller than Long Pond, lay in a hollow south of Union Street and west of Cranston Street, inside the curve of the present Amtrak main line; it was obliterated in 1930.

All of Elmwood was originally an agricultural adjunct of Providence. Its major thoroughfares -- Broad Street, Elmwood-Reservoir-Pontiac Avenues, Cranston Street, and Potters Avenue -- derived primarily from the system of colonial highways linking Providence with the hinterlands, but also reflect the vagaries of topography and early farm boundaries. Subsequent residential development, concentrated from about 1865 to about 1930, caused the growth of the present network of side streets (cf. 1849 and 1870 maps, Figures 1 and 2). Tree-shaded and lined with narrow-fronted, deep, frame houses, these generally quiet side streets are characteristic of Elmwood. The dwellings, built for one-, two-, or three-family occupancy, stand shoulder to shoulder and within each block are set back from the street a fairly uniform distance of between twenty to fifty feet.

The overall residential character of the area is varied by pockets of industrial development on the periphery and by commercial development along the major arteries. Elmwood Avenue, Cranston, and Broad Streets have lost most of their residential quality and use as a result of commercial pressures and the advent of the automobile. These streets are treeless, busy thoroughfares with an unattractive mix of residences,

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gasoline stations, funeral homes, parking lots, and twentieth century commercial establishments.

The subsection Elmwood, a neighborhood of primarily one- and two-family houses, developed almost entirely between 1865 and 1930 as an upper- and middle-class suburb. Although its principal avenue, Elmwood, was once lined with substantial houses and is now a heavily travelled commercial strip, side streets such as Parkis, Princeton, and Adelaide Avenues and Whitmarsh, Mawney, and Melrose Streets, retain relatively intact streetscapes and the finest of Elmwood's remaining Victorian homes. These streets are included within the Elmwood and Parkis-Comstock Historic Districts herein nominated. Elmwood's western edge, the site of Long Pond, has become, in the twentieth century, a light industry zone.

West Elmwood remains a lower- and middle-class residential area of two-family dwellings built generally between 1860 and 1920. The spine of this area, Cranston Street, is narrow and congested and lined with two- and three-family houses and under-utilized late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century commercial structures. The section of the survey area west of Cranston Street is a homogeneous neighborhood of two- and three-family houses built between 1890 and 1930.

The West End section between Elmwood Avenue and Cranston Street consists of a mid- and late nineteenth-century neighborhood of one- and two-family homes flanked by small-scale late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century industrial developments. Both the Jones Warehouses and the New England Butt Company Complex, herein nominated, are located here. Much of the West End is now badly deteriorated and large tracts have been razed to provide space for renewal projects such as Wiggin Village public housing and the Classical and Central High School complex.

Within the survey area three relatively small historic districts -- Elmwood, Parkis-Comstock, and Trinity Square (see Survey Area Map) -- have been defined. The first two districts are the most intact residential sections within the survey boundaries and are vivid reminders of the qualities which all of Elmwood possessed in its halcyon days. Trinity Square Historic District, although retaining but a fragment of its former grandeur and definition, is still a visually and geographically important urban space within Providence and an historically important node. (See Inventory listing for further specific information.) Six individual properties or complexes are also included in this nomination: Calvary Baptist Church, the Richard Henry Deming House, the Jones Warehouses, the Josephine White Block, the New England Butt Company Complex, and All Saints Memorial Church. A seventh complex clearly deserving of National Register listing has been identified and documented, but is not being nominated at this time.

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II. Architectural Description

The great majority of Elmwood's building stock is residential and dates from the 1845-1930 period. Urban housing, designed with the limitations of the city lot ever in mind, it nevertheless reflects a broad range of contemporary architectural types and styles in use throughout Rhode Island and eastern America. Dwellings originally designed for two-family occupancy predominate, but single-family homes are not uncommon. Triple-decker houses and apartments are a scattered phenomenon.

Single-Family Housing

The single-family dwelling was the first house type to appear in Elmwood and, with its connotation of suburban spaciousness, it remained popular nearly to the end of the era of development. Many of the earliest houses, built in the 1845-1865 period, are one or one-and-a-half-story, end-gable structures with simple classical references such as cornice return-mouldings and plain, wide-board-framed entrances.

A few more pretentious Italianate dwellings were built in the late 1850s and early 1860s. These clapboarded versions of the Italian palazzo mansions constructed on Benefit, Hope, and Prospect streets on Providence's East Side a few years earlier are boxy structures with low hipped roofs and widely projecting eaves. The best is the Charles F. Phillips House (c. 1857) at 539 Potters Avenue. A square structure with quoins, eaves consoles, and molded window caps, it possesses a delicately scaled, arcaded front veranda. Other Italianate houses are to be found at 27 Princeton Avenue and 25 Whitmarsh Street.

By 1860 the bracketed mode was in vogue. Elmwood's bracketed houses featured eaves, doorway and porch lintels, and the often-present door hood all ornamented by oversized and elaborate brackets with fanciful outlines. The earliest bracketed-style house remaining in Elmwood is the Christopher C. Potter house (c. 1859) at 480 Elmwood Avenue. Though square and possessing widely projecting eaves similar to an Italianate palazzo, the structure lacks any trim which may be described as "Italian" and the eaves are ornamented by brackets, rather than by the customary consoles.

Domestic architecture built in Elmwood and the West End between 1865 and 1910 forms a catalogue of Late Victorian architectural tastes. The characteristic style from the 1860s to 1880 was the French Second Empire. The finest Second Empire homes were concentrated along Elmwood and Parkis Avenues and Burnett and Mawney Streets. Most of the early examples, such as the L. H. Comstock House, (c. 1869) at 47 Parkis Avenue, are simply Italianate and Italianate-bracketed

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structures capped with mansard roofs. By the 1870s, however, mansard-roofed houses with detailing derived from a variety of other architectural styles were common. Houses such as the opulent John R. Cory Mansion (c. 1876) at 37 Mawney Street and the Josiah W. Richardson House (c. 1878) at 14 Parkis Avenue display elongated, over-scaled bracketing and other decorative touches which create a rich and highly sculptural quality. The Richard Henry Deming House (c. 1870) at 66 Burnett Street is one of Elmwood's finest Second Empire houses and is herein nominated individually (see photos 29-32).

In the 1870s and early 1880s the "Stick Style" attained a degree of popularity. The style is best represented in Elmwood by the Daboll house (c. 1875-1882) at 172 Daboll Street and the Valleau House (c. 1875) at 130 Moore Street. Both possess clapboard wall surfaces marked off with vertical and horizontal applied timbering, and Swiss-style scalloped-bottom, vertical boarding, eaves trim, and gable ornaments.

Between 1880 and 1900 Queen Anne style houses were most popular. One of Elmwood's best remaining Queen Anne structures is the Joseph G. Birch House (c. 1885) at 49 Princeton Avenue. The pattern of protruding and receding wall planes, the combination of clapboards and plain and patterned shingling, and the lattice-work and turned-post porch trim give this house a rich and varied appearance typical of the better Queen Anne houses. Other fine examples stand at 260 and 638 Elmwood Avenue, 20 Moore Street, and 30 Daboll. More typical of Elmwood's Queen Anne residences, however, are the modest, one-and-a-half-story, clapboarded structures with shingled gables and, sometimes, a spindlework porch. Dwellings such as those built at 81 Congress Avenue and 112 Emerson Street about 1895 exemplify this common Elmwood single-family housing type.

A number of the more prominent Elmwood houses of the Queen Anne era reflect an eclectic approach to design. George Wilkinson's rambling house (c. 1888) at 153 Ontario Street has stucco and half-timbered walls, as does the Frederick E. Field residence (c. 1890) at 120 Melrose Street. Frederick E. Shaw's brick mansion at 126 Melrose, built c. 1894, has a steep roof decorated with Dutch step-gables. In the 1890s, the round or octagonal, turreted tower became almost a standard fixture of larger houses, such as the Samuel A. Otis house (c. 1896) at 203 Adelaide Avenue.

The first full-blown Colonial Revival dwelling in Elmwood, the Webster Knight House at 118 Princeton Avenue, was built about 1897. A gambrel-roofed, center-entrance structure patterned after the finest mid-eighteenth-century New England houses, it presents a lavish display of early American decoration on the exterior, while paying homage to colonial models in its center-hall plan and double-flight

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staircase. Other Colonial Revival residences for the upper class, such as the gambrel-roofed, Hussey house (of c. 1911) at 179 Ontario Street were built as late as 1912.

A by-product of the slow transition from Queen Anne to Colonial Revival was the renewed interest in directness and simplicity in plan and decoration which appeared at the turn of the century. Roof pitches were lowered; wings, gables, and other extensions of the basic form were kept to a minimum; and unnecessary detailing was avoided. The earliest of these simple and direct houses in Elmwood is the brick- and stucco-walled Smith-Malmstead House (c. 1905) at 77 Princeton Avenue.

In the teens and twenties this interest in straightforward planning and restrained decoration found expression in the bungalow. Three types of bungalows are found in the survey area: narrow and deep, hip-roofed structures with front porches (of which the John Blair, Jr., House of c. 1911 at 110 Gallatin Street is a particularly fine example); flank-gable dwellings with a partial or full-width front porch, (such as the Dodge House of c. 1914 at 171 Gallatin Street); and, occasionally, end-gable dwellings (such as the Johnson House, c. 1914, at 131 Warrington Street).

By 1920 broad-fronted, two-story, rectangular, hip-roofed houses, minimally decorated with stock elements such as bay windows and Colonial Revival door porches, were becoming popular. Exteriors, enlivened by the now ubiquitous double or tripartite picture window, were often clad in weatherboarding or clapboarding of unusual width. The Jacob Horvitz House at 127 Gallatin Street (c. 1922) and the John F. Kelley House at 199 Atlantic Avenue (1925) are good examples of this type.

The lower or southern Elmwood streets contain a profusion of Dutch Colonial houses, such as the Samuel Littman house (c. 1930) at 233 Warrington Street. Homes with jerkinhead roofs, distinguished by their flattened gables recalling the thatched roofs of English cottages, are also common. The Johnson House (c. 1922) at 145 Warrington Street and the Smith House (c. 1929) at 238 Warrington Street are both handsome examples.

Three handsome brick and stucco-and-half-timbered "Stockbrokers' Tudor" dwellings, all dating from the late 1930s, stand at 13 Kipling, 169 Sumter, and 252 Warrington streets.

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Two and Three-Family Houses

The two-family house, a two-story structure in which the living space is divided horizontally into two units -- the lower unit generally including the basement and the upper, the attic -- was one of the most common house types in Providence in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The two-family house first appeared in Elmwood and the West End in the 1850s. The typical two-family house built between 1850 and 1885 was a two-story, end-gable, clapboarded structure, with a single entrance giving access to a single, common stair hall. The earliest examples have simple Greek Revival detailing but, by the mid-1860s, dwellings with bracketed cornices, bracketed and hooded entrances and two-story bay windows became the standard form. Although never as popular as the less expensive end-gable dwellings, mansard-roofed two-family houses were constructed from the late 1860s into the 1880s.

In the 1880s and 1890s, major transformations in the two-family house form occurred. By 1890 separate entrance halls had largely replaced the old common hall, and two-entrance structures began to appear for the first time. Often, one- or two-level front porches were added to extend the living space. More steeply pitched cross-gable roofs replaced the simple, end-gable roofs of earlier days.

By 1890 transformations in the house form were matched by basic changes in decoration, as Queen Anne replaced bracketed trim. Queen Anne-style dwellings exhibited great variety in their fenestration and detailing and were usually constructed with clapboarded first stories and shingled upper stories. They often featured elaborate porches with turned posts, sometimes highlighted by a delicate, valance-like, spindlework band across the top. Many Queen Anne houses were characterized by robust, sculptural gable treatments.

By the turn of the century more restrained Colonial Revival-inspired structures, often with hip roofs, began to supplant the florid Queen Anne houses. Decorative gable treatments disappeared, and the Queen Anne-style porch, with its turned supports and spindlework, gave way to reserved porches with thin classical columns, usually of the Tuscan order.

By 1920, however, while this type of two-family house remained popular, changes in the basic form and style began to appear. Characteristic of the 1920s was the introduction of the sun room, a glassed-in alcove-extension of the living room at the front of the house. At the same time the aesthetic of simplification at work in single-family house design came into play here as well. The low hip roof became the almost invariable rule. Window units became increasingly numerous and wide.

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Such detailing as was present consisted mostly of stock Colonial Revival trim.

Three-deckers—three-story, three-family structures planned along the lines of two-family houses, with separate entrance halls for the ground floor and upper stories—first appeared in Providence in the 1890s, and in Elmwood about 1900. Construction of three-deckers, never a very popular house type in relatively uncongested Elmwood, ceased in the late 1920s.

Apartment Houses

The teens saw the advent of the apartment house. While a few tenement houses had appeared along Cranston Street and Potters Avenue in the 1880s and 1890s, middle and upper-middle income families began to accept apartment living only reluctantly and only as a result of the increasing cost of single-family houses and the scarcity of domestic help. Providence's first large apartment house, the eight-story Minden at 123 Waterman Street on the East Side, was erected in 1912. "The Whitmarsh" at 86 Whitmarsh Street, built only a year later, was the first large apartment house in Elmwood. It is a brick and stucco, Tudor-style structure, with short arms flanking a broad courtyard. Other apartment houses built in the 1910s and 1920s, such as the four-story, U-shaped, Stephens Apartments (c. 1928) at 315 Elmwood Avenue, reflected Georgian styling.

Other Structures

The survey area's architectural heritage also includes churches. Nine houses of worship were built here between 1865 and 1915. Most are handsome but modest structures important architecturally only within the most local context. Three, however -- Trinity United Methodist Church, All Saints Memorial (Episcopal) Church, and Calvary Baptist Church -- are imposing structures of high architectural merit. Each of these is being nominated herein.

Commercial and industrial structures form only a minor and relatively unimportant segment of the area's architecture. Most of Elmwood's commercial buildings are low, flat-roofed, utilitarian, brick structures dating from the 1920s. The most interesting commercial example, and one of the few surviving in Elmwood from the nineteenth century, is the tin-fronted, late Victorian Josephine White Block at 735-737 Cranston Street (nominated in this document). Elmwood's most notable industrial plants also date from the latter part of the nineteenth century. Two of the most important complexes -- the New England Butt Company and the Jones Warehouses -- are herein nominated for both their historic and architectural significance.

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III. Archeological Description

No archeological survey or testing has yet taken place in the Elmwood multiple resource area.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Elmwood's historic resources date almost exclusively from the years 1860-1910, the period of Elmwood's greatest growth and prosperity. In those years the section became a thriving suburb of Providence, containing large upper-class enclaves and served by fine churches and other public buildings. Industrial and commercial growth, although limited in scope, also took place. The historic resources nominated in this document are the best of what survives from those prosperous years of growth in this southwestern section of the city: the finest residential areas and churches, and the most notable commercial and industrial structures. All possess a considerable degree of significance within the city of Providence, and several are important in a statewide or even regional context.

The history of Elmwood predates the arrival of the English in Providence. Before the first Colonial settlement in Rhode Island, the Elmwood area lay within the domain of the Narragansett Indians, a branch of the Algonquin family of tribes. The Narragansetts are said to have had a large wigwam village on the banks of Mashapaug Pond at the time of Roger Williams' arrival. The pond shore, although heavily disturbed over the years, could thus possess some archeological potential.

In 1636 Roger Williams and several others established the settlement of Providence. Elmwood was included in the large tract they initially purchased. The land was at first held in common; but by the 1650s, all of what had become Elmwood was privately owned.

Settlement in Elmwood probably began shortly after 1675, but took place slowly. As late as the middle of the eighteenth century only a few farms existed and even fewer roads. Broad Street, originally a part of an Indian trail known as the Pequot Path, was opened up in the seventeenth century; the present Cranston Street was laid out in 1717; Middle or Greenwich Road (Elmwood-Reservoir-Pontiac Avenues), in 1731; and Potters Avenue, in 1737.

In 1774 efforts to establish a new town in the southwestern part of Providence culminated in the incorporation of Cranston. Nearly all of Elmwood, as well as South Providence, was included in Cranston, and remained under its jurisdiction until 1868. Of Colonial Elmwood only the early highway pattern survives.

Between the end of the Revolutionary War and about 1845 the Elmwood area underwent a transition from being a rural section of Cranston, with few economic ties

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to Providence, to being a suburb of that city. This transformation came about as a result of the growth of Providence. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries the city expanded rapidly to the south and west, the result of the development of manufacturing and shipping interests, and of the opening of better land communication with other cities by the construction of turnpikes.

In the light of this burgeoning growth, vacant lands near the city outskirts acquired new importance as sources of agricultural produce and as prime locations for suburban estates. As a result, in the decades following the Revolution speculation-minded Providence merchants, mariners, and professional people acquired an ever growing share of the local real estate. They often rented the property to tenant farmers; but beginning in the 1790s, some of these landowners began to settle in the Elmwood area themselves, establishing residential estates and summer homes, particularly along the Middle Road. All but two of their homes have been obliterated by later developments. As new estate-farms supplemented the scattered colonial farmsteads, this northern part of Cranston became closely bound to Providence both economically and socially.

The years from 1845 to 1930 form the major era of Elmwood's development. During this period what was a thinly populated district on Cranston's northern periphery grew into a densely built-up Providence neighborhood. Most of the area's physical form -- its side streets, housing, and institutional structures -- dates from this era. Even the name "Elmwood" is a product of the times. The term was first used by Joseph J. Cooke to name a large farm he bought in lower Elmwood in 1843. It is said to have been Samuel S. Halliday, a minister and religious tract dealer and newly settled resident, who, about 1850, suggested calling the entire section "Elmwood."

The history of Elmwood during its era of development may be divided into three periods. The first period -- from 1845 to 1868 -- saw the beginnings of urban development as Elmwood's road grid was laid down and its neighborhood character established. These developments were directly related to the inevitable and rapid southward expansion of Providence. In 1840 the city's population over 23,000; ten years later it passed the 40,000 mark, and by 1860 Providence had 50,000 residents. In the 1840s and 1850s the built-up part of the city crept inexorably south-westward along Broad, Cranston, and Westminster streets.

This first period ends in 1868, with the successful conclusion of efforts to annex portions of Cranston and Elmwood and South Providence to Providence. The movement to annex these areas, which had been increasingly tied to Providence economically and socially, began in earnest in 1854. The town voters defeated

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this initial effort, but did vote to locate the town clerk's office in Elmwood. By the 1860s the rapid growth of Elmwood and South Providence, particularly the burgeoning Irish population in South Providence, with its Democratic allegiance, was viewed as a threat to the continued domination of Cranston politics by the Republicans. In 1868 the town of Cranston, with the blessing of the Republican-dominated state government, authorized return of the Elmwood and South Providence sections to Providence.

Between the annexation of the area to Providence in 1868, and about 1910, Elmwood underwent its greatest period of urbanization, and assumed in large measure its present form. This rapid growth was a reflection of the tremendous industrial and commercial expansion of Providence, as a result of which the city's population swelled from 69,000 in 1870 to 176,000 in 1900 and 225,000 in 1910. It was into Elmwood and other newly established residential sections around the city's outskirts that most of the population growth was funnelled.

A second explanation for Elmwood's rapid development in this period was the continuing improvement of public transportation. Omnibus lines were established on Elmwood Avenue and Cranston Street in the late 1850s. Improvements kept pace with the growing population. In 1864-1865 horse car lines replaced slow-moving omnibuses, and in the following fifteen years the tracks were considerably extended. More rapid trolleys in turn replaced the horse cars in the 1892-1894 period, and served until the late 1930s.

Another impetus to urbanization in the 1868-1910 period was the development of pockets of heavy industry in the West End and near Long Pond after the Civil War, and the opening of the Gorham factory near Mashapaug Pond by 1890. The establishment of factories led directly to the settlement both of workers and supervisory personnel.

The years from 1910 to 1930 saw the conclusion of the process of urbanization, as new developments filled the last of Elmwood's open spaces. The area's growth in this period was spurred by the coming of the auto. Its advent permitted residential development in areas farther from the trolley lines and work places, and fostered the decentralization of business from downtown. Elmwood's development was largely finished and its supply of vacant land nearly exhausted by 1930, only five years after Providence reached its all-time maximum population of 268,000.

Elmwood in the half-century after 1845 was populated mostly by Yankee stock, the descendants of old-established, New England families. Some were middle-class residents -- carpenters, masons, house painters, and others involved in the building trades; jewelers and other craftsmen; and grocers and shopkeepers. Those who were factory workers often held the most skilled jobs.

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Although the Yankee stock was pervasive in Elmwood into the twentieth century, from the first it was centered in the section of Elmwood between Broad Street and Elmwood Avenue, and in the West End between Elmwood Avenue and Cranston Street. Elmwood Avenue from Trinity Square to Potters Avenue became the hub of Elmwood's Yankee community. The Protestant churches which became its most tangible embodiment were located nearby.

By the 1850s some of Providence's thoroughly Yankee commercial, financial, and industrial upper class began to move out to the new suburbs of South Providence, the West End, and Elmwood. At first they settled along Elmwood Avenue and Broad Street; however, between 1868 and 1890 upper-class developments spread into Parkis Avenue and the sections of Mawney, Daboll, and Burnett streets near Elmwood Avenue; similar developments occurred on nearby Princeton Avenue and Whitmarsh Street between 1885 and 1905; and a third upper-class district, centered on Adelaide Avenue and Melrose Street, grew up between 1870 and 1910. Elmwood's upper-class residents were typically wholesalers and retailers; real estate, commodity, and investment brokers; insurance agents; professional and managerial people; and building contractors. Many of the most prominent were industrialists.

Among Elmwood's leading citizens and wealthiest residents were the Knights. Robert Knight (1826-1912), who lived after 1863 in a village at 297 Elmwood Avenue (demolished c. 1950), was a highly successful cotton manufacturer. Between 1852 and 1890 he and a brother, Benjamin B. Knight (1813-1898), established a cotton manufacturing empire. At its height in 1890 the B. B. & R. Knight firm operated twenty-one mills in Rhode Island and Massachusetts and was one of the world's largest cotton manufacturing concerns. It originated the "Fruit of the Loom" trademark. Two of Robert Knight's sons, Webster Knight (1854-1933) and C. Prescott Knight (1856-1933), learned the process of cotton manufacturing in the Knight mills, and served as President and Vice President of the B. B. & R. Knight firm from the time of Robert Knight's death in 1912 until 1920, when the company was sold to New York interests. Webster Knight's home stands at 118 Princeton Avenue and the Knight-Memorial Library dominates a nearby section of Elmwood Avenue. Both are included in the Elmwood Historic District.

In the 1880s and 1890s Elmwood became the home of numerous jewelry and gold and silver products manufacturers. Adelaide Avenue alone contained the residences of six manufacturing jewelers, two gold and silver refiners, and one silverware manufacturer. George Wilkinson, General Superintendent of the Gorham Manufacturing Company, lived at 153 Ontario Street.

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Unlike the affluent section of Elmwood between Broad and Bucklin streets, West Elmwood was from the first an ethnically and racially mixed neighborhood. A considerable Yankee population existed in the area, especially along the upper West Elmwood streets, but, by 1890, they were joined by small numbers of Germans and French Canadians and, in the early twentieth century, by small numbers of Italians, Jews, and Armenians. It was the Irish, however, who were predominant in West Elmwood throughout the 1845-1930 period.

The Irish began to settle in Elmwood and West Elmwood in the 1850s. While high land prices for the most part kept them out of upper West Elmwood and the section of Elmwood east of Long Pond, low prices in the vicinity of Potters Avenue in West Elmwood and near the railroad tracks encouraged settlement there. By 1870 lower West Elmwood, from Waldo Street to Huntington Avenue and south along the west side of Mashapaug Pond, and from Madison to Cranston Street, was a predominantly Irish neighborhood. It remained so even into the 1950s.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the Elmwood area continued to experience growth on a small scale, as the last scattered house lots were built upon one by one. Since 1950, however, as the section's last open spaces disappeared and Elmwood became an urban rather than suburban neighborhood, the area has witnessed a gradual decline of neighborhood vitality.

This decline began with overcrowding. As early as the 1940s, many of the larger single-family homes were converted into apartments and the numerous two and three-family dwellings, further subdivided. By the 1950s the demand for parking space caused by the proliferation of automobiles and residents, was in many cases reducing the already small yards to meaningless vestiges or clearing buildings entirely. The ageing of the housing stock, in too many cases without proper maintenance, also spurred decline. Overcrowding and deteriorated housing served to discourage settlement by new residents and encouraged the emigration of old residents to newer suburbs. The movement of middle-class residents from Elmwood to suburbs more distant from Providence picked up momentum in the late 1950s and 1960s as new expressways made longer-distance commuting to city work-places more feasible.

The area's most prosperous residents were the first to depart. Elmwood's Yankees made their final exit from the Elmwood scene in the 1950s. The Jews, who had begun to settle in lower Elmwood early in the century, also began a suburban exodus in the 1950s. In 1951 lower Elmwood contained about 1850 Jews; by 1963 the number was reduced to 1000. During the 1950s and early 1960s the effect of these losses was in part ameliorated by the settlement of upwardly mobile, middle-class Swedes and other whites from South Providence. Their migration resulted from population shifts

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and racial problems in South Providence.

In the late 1960s and early 1970s large numbers of blacks also moved from the deteriorating South Providence neighborhood to Elmwood. Settling first in the older sections such as upper Elmwood and West Elmwood, they had become intermixed with the white population throughout most of Elmwood by the mid-1970s. Hispanics began to settle in Elmwood in the middle 1970s. Mostly Puerto Ricans and Dominicans who came to Providence from New York City, they now comprise a significant part of Elmwood's population.

In the 1970s Elmwood has entered a period of real urban decay. A large part of the problem is the result of the decay of the adjacent South Providence neighborhood. The blight in that section caused its largely black population to move into Elmwood where profiteering absentee landlords exploited the situation with high rents and poor building maintenance. From Public Street the zone of urban decay spread out, cancer-like, block by block into other parts of Elmwood. Fortunately, Elmwood has not suffered from urban decay to the extent that South Providence has. However, spot demolitions of structures have taken place along many of the older streets, leaving weeds and junk-filled vacant lots as visual blights.

Elmwood now stands on the threshold either of a renaissance or a lingering period of disintegration. Much of its aging housing stock is deteriorated and abandonment is beginning to occur. The residents for the most part lack a sense of neighborhood consciousness and community pride. Nevertheless, the area's fundamental character remains intact and such housing organizations as S.W.A.P. (Stop Wasing Abandoned Property), the Elmwood Foundation, and the new Neighborhood Housing Services offer some hope for the future.

Summary

Streets, public spaces, and buildings form the visible evidences of Elmwood's past; through them the neighborhood's history can be traced. Most of the area's principal arteries -- Broad and Cranston Streets, Elmwood, Reservoir, and Pontiac Avenues, and Potters Avenue -- date from colonial times. The local street pattern, largely established in the mid-nineteenth century, reflects, in many cases, colonial-era farm boundaries. A few old houses survive as reminders of Elmwood's years as an almost rural section of Cranston, dotted with farms and suburban estates.

Most of Elmwood's man-made fabric, however, dates from the 1845-1930 period when the area developed as a desirable residential section of Providence. In those years, the character each section still possesses was established. The many large

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and elaborate Late Victorian homes between Broad Street and Elmwood Avenue serve as reminders of the prosperous merchants, businessmen, and industrialists who made this area their home. West Elmwood's less flamboyant streetscapes of (for the most part) modest and unpretentious houses reflect that area's nineteenth and early twentieth-century character as a working-class neighborhood.

Although some of the best of Elmwood's Late Victorian residential sections, particularly those along Elmwood Avenue, have been ruined over the years, most of the area's late nineteenth and early twentieth-century neighborhoods remain intact. These neighborhoods, with their distinguished architecture, form a precious legacy for the future.

The structures, complexes, and districts herein nominated are all significant in architectural terms. The well preserved late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century districts of fine Italianate, Bracketed, Second Empire, "Stick Style," Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival houses, possess city and architectural importance. The individual structures and complexes possess for the most part local or state-wide significance as above-average examples of residential, ecclesiastical, commercial, or industrial architecture. However, All Saints Memorial Church bears national importance as a major work by an architect of national prominence.

Among the nominated structures and districts are the homes of many of the city's leading late nineteenth and early twentieth-century businessmen and industrialists. Of particular importance for their associations with prominent residents are the homes of Webster Knight, the cotton manufacturer, at 118 Princeton Avenue; the cotton manufacturer, at 118 Princeton Avenue; the contractor, Frederick E. Shaw, at 126 Melrose Street; and George Wilkinson, Superintendent of the Gorham Works, at 153 Ontario Street.

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10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____ see individual entry sheets

UTM REFERENCES

A

ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
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B

ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
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C

ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
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D

ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

see individual entry sheets

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Robert O. Christensen

Preservation Planner

ORGANIZATION

Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission

DATE

January, 1979

STREET & NUMBER

150 Benefit Street

TELEPHONE

401-277-2678

CITY OR TOWN

Providence

STATE

Rhode Island

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

See individual entries 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

Frank C. Williams

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

May 17, 1979

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

1-7-80

ATTEST

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

1-7-80

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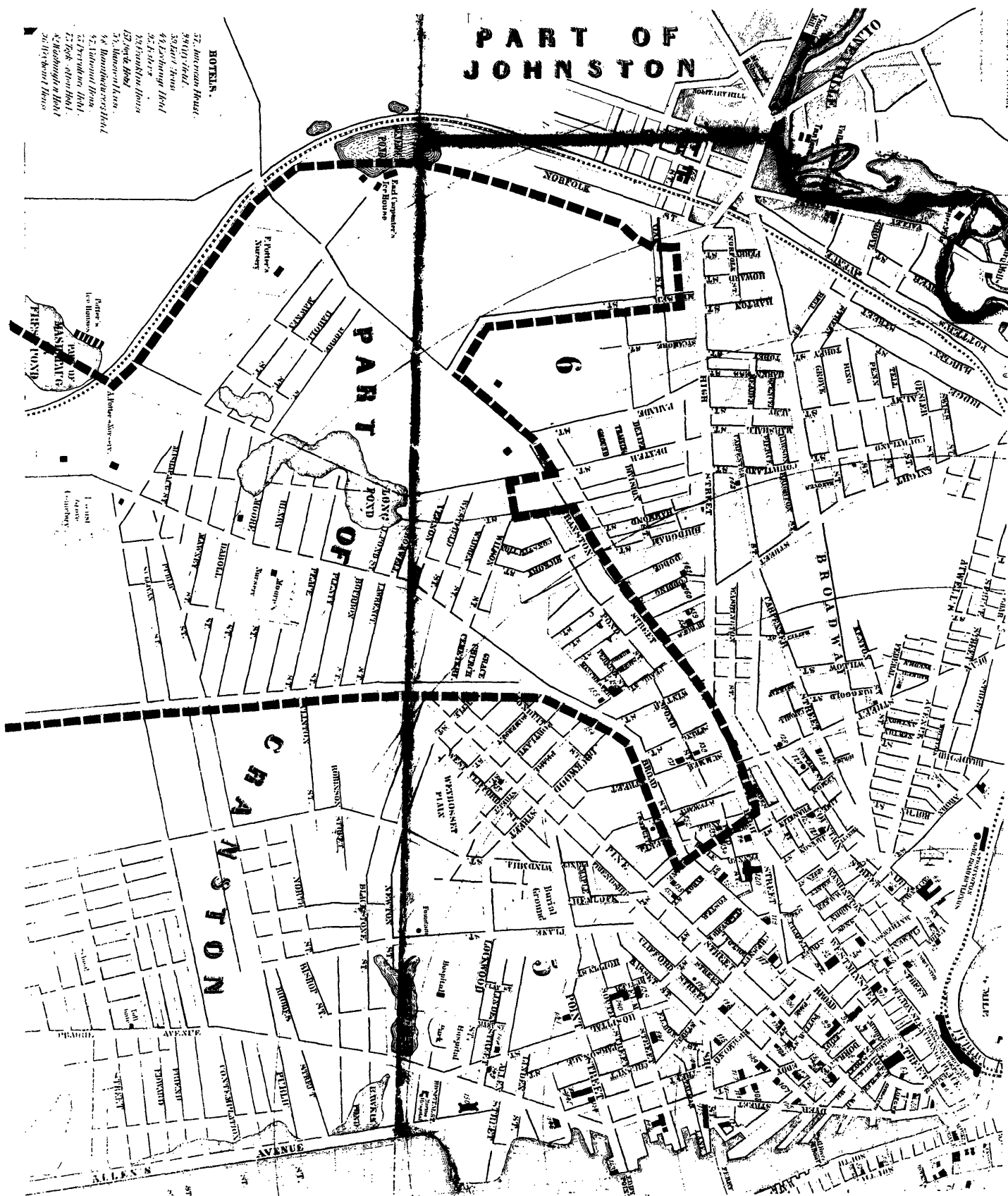
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Detail from A-Map of the City of Providence,
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Elmwood Multiple Resource Nomination
Providence, Rhode Island

Source: Rhode Island Historical Society

Providence County

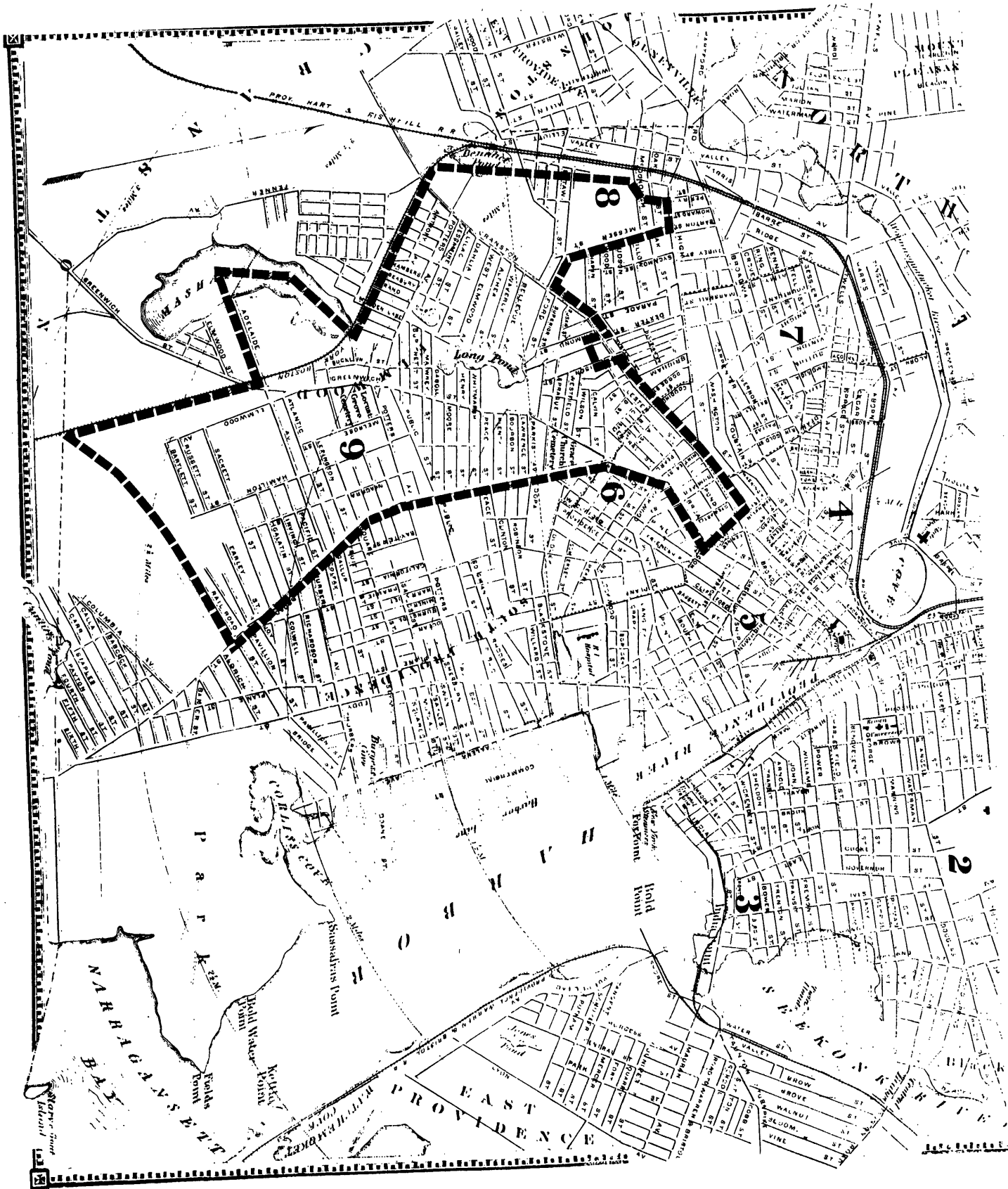
Section of Providence map, with Elmwood indicated
by dotted lines.

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Figure #1



Detail from Map of the City of Providence,
by D. G. Beers & Co., New York, 1870.
Elmwood Multiple Resource Nomination
Providence, Rhode Island

Source: Rhode Island Historical Society

Section of Providence map, with Elmwood
indicated by dotted lines.

Providence County

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Figure #2