

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**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
THE ARCADE
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
130 Westminster Street and 65 Weybosset Street — NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CITY, TOWN
Providence CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Second
STATE
Rhode Island VICINITY OF
44 CODE
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 type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" 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
Rhode Island Association for the Blind Mrs. Helen Worden, Executive Director
STREET & NUMBER
1058 Broad Street
CITY, TOWN
Providence VICINITY OF
Rhode Island 02905 STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC
City Hall
STREET & NUMBER
Dorrance and Washington Streets
CITY, TOWN
Providence STATE
Rhode Island

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Historic American Buildings Survey (see continuation sheet)
DATE
1959 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
Library of Congress
CITY, TOWN
Washington, D.C. STATE

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

For various reasons the most interesting early description of the Arcade is the one Warren wrote for William Staples in 1843. The latter printed it with orthographical changes, added a paragraph on the beauty of the structure, and gave the name of the architect without, however, mentioning the contracting firm, Tallman and Bucklin.

"Built of Granite Stone in 1827 and 1828 it fronts on two streets 74 feet on Westminster at the North and 74 feet on Weybosset at the South and is 216 feet in length it forms a transept or cross of a 194 feet by 42.

the two fronts are ornamented with recess Porticos 15 feet deep each composed of six Grecian Ionic columns of 3 feet diameter and two square antaes and crowned with an Entablature and cornice forming a Pediment, the whole height of the front Colonnade is 45 feet from the base to the Pediment

The Roof over the entrance hall or avenue is covered with glass 32 feet in width by 188 feet in length the roof over the stors is covered with tin

you enter the Portico by a flight of 4 steps running with the corner Buttments the entire length of the colonade

the hall of avenue running through from street to Street is 13 feet in width the building is three storys high there is 26 stors on each story making in all 78 stors

the stors in the second and third storys you ascend by two flights of stone steps under each Portico in each front

the Corridors forming the floors of the 2d and 3d storys are protected by a strong cast Iron ornamental ballustrade railing cap with mahogany and running entire around the interior of the Building

the whole Cost Estimated at \$145000"

This description is by no means complete, stressing only the details Warren considered noteworthy--the inner dimensions, the plan and organization, the roof. Much more is known. The sidewalls were unfinished, as A. J. Davis has pointed out, since other buildings were to go alongside. The granite came from the Johnston, Rhode Island farm of James Olney who cut his initials and the date, 1827, into one of the columns. The shafts are twenty-one feet high and the capitals imitate those of the Ionic temple on the Ilissus. Except for the Attic base the proportions follow this prototype though hardly justifying, in our eyes, the Journal's description of the portico, "a copy of one of the most celebrated Grecian models."

(continued)

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 type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1827-1829 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Russell Warren (1783-1860)

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Some of the finest examples of the Greek Revival style in America are in the state of Rhode Island. These houses, churches and commercial structures are largely the work of two men--Russell Warren and James C. Bucklin (1801-1880). The Arcade, one of the most beautiful of those early commercial structures imitating European business arcades, is still the most elegant building in the area and still functions as a series of shops. It is also an important example of early monolithic granite construction.

Praised in all the basic texts (Hamlin, Downing and Hitchcock), the Arcade was studied in particular by Robert Alexander (Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians, October 1953, vol. 12, no. 3). He gives the design to Warren with James C. Bucklin as assistant in the execution of the work (newspaper accounts 1827). It was probably Bucklin who is responsible for the fine masonry and granite work.

Warren was influenced by John Haviland's designs (Haviland was designing Arcades for New York and Philadelphia in 1826) particularly the vast skylights and the general plan and section of the Providence building. Talbot Hamlin describes it as a building of "Great exterior dignity in its granite Ionic order, it has a light and open interior, skylighted, with balconies of rich and elegant cast iron. With the customary freedom of the best Greek Revival designers, its architects have not hesitated to use arched openings where they wished. Providence was enormously proud of it and rightly so, and engravings of it were widely published."¹ In 1833 a Scotch critic found the Doric columns barbarized by the Ionic capitals (an "absence of taste") but this freedom of adaptation of ancient forms was typical of American architects--Parris' and Willard's St. Paul's in Boston was probably the inspiration for the Westminster Street Facade.

Robert Alexander comments on the interior:

"It shows a fine integration of practical structural and decorative requirements. The porticoes give access to the building and house the stairways supported by the granite walls. Passage to any part of the building is quick, the early Greek Revival character appears

¹ Talbot Hamlin, Greek Revival Architecture in America. New York: Dover Press, 1944, pp.182.

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CONTINUATION SHEET The Arcade ITEM NUMBER 6 PAGE 1

Title of survey:

A report on the Historic Existing Points of Interest . . . of the State of Rhode Island. Technical paper no. 2 by Louis C. David, Jr., for Rhode Island Statewide Land Use and Planning Program.

Date of Survey: 1967 State

Depository for Survey Records:

Rhode Island Statewide Land Use and Planning Program.
State House
90 Smith Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903 Code: 44

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CONTINUATION SHEET The Arcade ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

The great skylight and the set-back upper levels admit a flood of light down to the first floor. Except for one passerelle the interior has been kept free of obstructions. The roof beams are cantilevered out to the ridge which is supported at its ends by the large arches. The relation to Boston is apparent in the various uses of the Benjamin-favored meander and paneling. The curved motive in the cast-iron railing has a similar background, being simply a console redesigned for this material and purpose.

The contrast between exterior and interior is great. The severe facades are relieved simply by a few moldings and the capitals and bases. It is only the wide intercolumniation that lightens the rather ponderous rhythm of the supports. Inside, the columns are fluted, moldings enriched, and small decorative units are repeated countless times. Here, it is the skillful handling of planes and directing of movement that subordinates the repetition to the over-all effect.

Structurally, a most important factor is the attempt at fireproof construction. Contemporary accounts made much of the granite, stone, and brick, the extensive use of concrete, the tin roofing, and even the iron shutters. It was felt, apparently, that the shop-fronts did not constitute a danger. Warren was not, however, an innovator in this respect nor did he develop any noteworthy methods. Possibly this concern for fireproofing arose out of an acquaintance with the work of Robert Mills in Charleston.

from Robert Alexander, Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians,
Vol. 12, No. 3, October 1953.

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CONTINUATION SHEET The Arcade ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

not simply in the decoration but in the compact organization into a clearly defined entity. At either end the arch and columns create a focal point. The iron railings and Ionic entablature with the supporting planes of shopfronts sweep through to connect the ends and visually delimit the interior space. The whole is an immediately comprehensible structure."²

He also documents the genesis of the building:

"A speculative venture, the Arcade was Cyrus Butler's initial challenge to Cheapside and the Brown family interests. Despite the utility and convenience of many shops grouped under one roof, it was less successful commercially than aesthetically.

The first newspaper mention of the Arcade, April 8, 1827, referred to the intended location and the presumptive increase in land values of the region. On April 22, the Gazette published a longer account based on drawings in which the major elements were present--the long avenue with entrance to the stores and the glazed roof for lighting. There were, however, twenty-eight shops on each floor, only two floors, and stairs at one entrance called the front.

At a later date, then, it was decided to add a third floor. This increase may have resulted from optimism on the part of the backers in the flush days of 1828. At any rate the depth of one store had to be surrendered, leaving only twenty-six on each floor. This space, thirteen and a half feet, permitted a vestibule at the Weybosset Street end for the additional stairways necessitated by the third floor and the expectation of great traffic. The inner columns and arch that support the ridgepole at either end were intended originally to stand on the floor. The crown of the arch would then have been exactly on a level with the cornice of the facade. Raised one story, these columns stand precariously over the edge of the spur wall below. A.J. Davis noted this structural peculiarity and carefully showed it in his drawings. The roof was built as originally planned, but, because the third story was so much narrower, coving along the side was introduced to cover an unfortunate gap below the skylight.

The north front shows little effect from this change of plan. The upper balcony seems crowded in at an awkward level while the first balcony railing is equidistant from the floor and from the architrave. The acroteria were planned from the beginning, and it was intended to have a marble statue on the center one. Those at the side, however,

²Robert Alexander, "The Arcade in Providence," JSAH, October, 1953, pp. 13-16

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were now extended inward to the raking cornices. It was at the south or Weybosset front that the greatest change occurred. Planned without a vestibule and stairways, this facade had not even been given a pediment. An early lithograph shows how deserted this region was; not a building stood near the Arcade. The third story had to be concealed by some means, but as quickly and cheaply as possible. These requirements were not to be met by a triangular pediment with its cutting along angles. The simple block and panel railing was designed, hastily quarried, and erected. Apparently it is not of the same material as the rest of the building; the difference in color appears in the photograph. It was not as well constructed; the expansion of the wooden ridge beam forced it out of line necessitating repairs in 1947." ³

³ Alexander, p. 14.

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CONTINUATION SHEET The Arcade ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

Cady, John Hutchins. The Civic and Architectural Development of Providence, 1636-1950. Providence, Rhode Island, 1957.

Downing, Antoinette Forrester. Early Homes of Rhode Island. Richmond, Virginia, 1937.

Alexander, Robert. "The Arcade in Providence" Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians. Vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 13-16. October, 1953.

Hamlin, Talbot. Greek Revival Architecture in America. New York: Dover Press, 1944.

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell, Jr. Rhode Island Architecture. Providence, Rhode Island, 1939.

----- . Architecture, Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries. Baltimore, 1958.

Kaufmann, Edgar, Jr., ed. The Rise of an American Architecture. New York, 1970.