

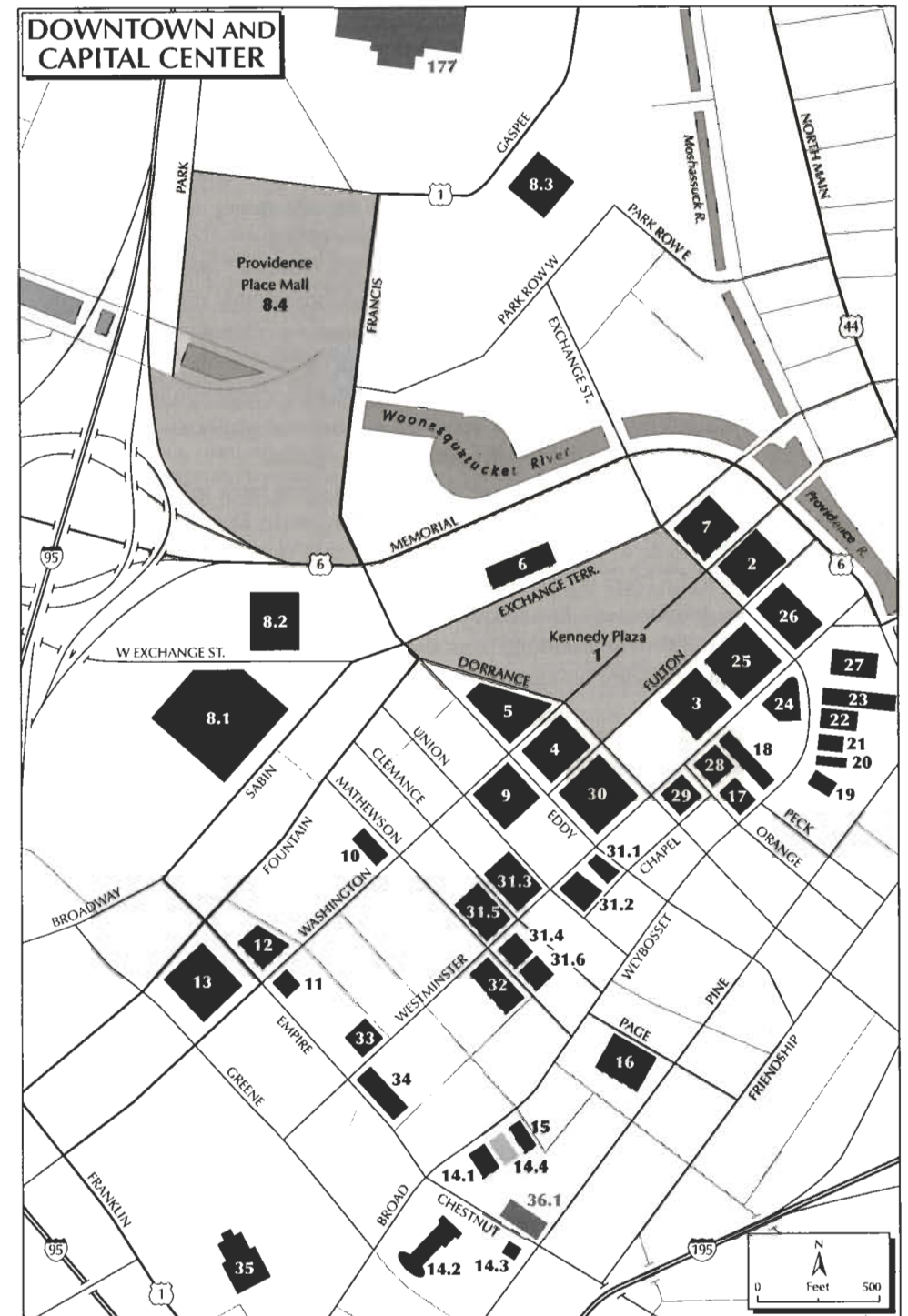
major factory enclave, the Woonasquatucket Industrial District, dominated by the former plant of Brown and Sharpe, the largest American machine tool manufacturer until after World War II. Farther west and north are other residential neighborhoods, including what remains of Elmhurst, once a nineteenth-century sylvan retreat, in which the largest residences tended to be more spaciouly conceived as mini-country villas with gardens and orchards, in contrast to the close-packed domiciles on College Hill. Two notable survivors remain on the campus of Providence College. Farther in the same direction at the very northwest corner of the city is the former textile mill village of Wanskuck.

The tour concludes southwest and then south of the city's center. Lined with Victorian mansions, Broadway was the address of choice from the 1870s onto the early twentieth century for many upper-income mercantile families. Next is a restored suburban enclave of late Victorian and Queen Anne Style houses around the Parade of Providence's formidable Cranston Street Armory. The tour concludes at the southern edge of the city with Roger Williams Park, an intact 230-acre landscape park, largely designed by the important nineteenth-century park and land planner H. W. S. Cleveland.

Existing architecture in Providence presents a microcosm of national developments, yet exhibits its own flavor with a number of distinctive characteristics. Here, in rare concentration, one can find colonial architecture and an especially lively, abundant, and autochthonous Federal style; much Greek Revival; a robust, long-lived development in the Italianate mode; and some fine High Victorian examples. Providence was an early and important center in the Colonial Revival, which left a number of distinctive buildings exhibiting a mix of Queen Anne and Colonial Revival modes. It boasts many handsome, if not radically innovative, industrial buildings, especially of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; one of the country's most intact and evolved downtowns from the same period; and important institutional structures. Providence ranks with such medium-sized eastern cities as Charleston, Savannah, and Salem (to cite a few competitors at random) for the number and quality of extant historic buildings and for their urbanistic impact, but at the same time offers more variety of type and period than these other cities. Put more bluntly, no American cities of their size have more to offer the architectural pilgrim than Providence and Newport, each with its own distinctive ambience.

Downtown Providence (Downcity) and Capital Center

The old business district of Providence offers an exceptional array of fine historic buildings dating from the late Federal and Greek Revival periods, when stores and offices began in earnest to cross the Providence River from their original colonial center ranged along Main Street. As in most American cities, however, before the 1960s this core was in serious jeopardy from challenges by suburban malls and the move of a number of businesses out of the center city, leaving it vacant and increasingly dilapidated.



For the historic downtown this decade turned out to be something of a watershed. The tight sweep of the Interstate 95 and 195 interchange around two sides of the old downtown (fortunately narrowly outside it rather than through it), begun in 1958, was completed in 1964. Consonant with the interstate's streamlined zip as a sign of modernity, plans to demolish much of the architectural past for glassy replacements set on landscaped plazas appeared in 1961. Lack of funds at the time, together with the hesitations characteristic of this conservative city, permitted already strong counterforces for preservation to prevail—with ultimate victory still in the offing.

In preference to the "olde towne" label by which such "historic" districts are customarily banished from the workaday city into a gaslit touristland, this still active business district was christened in 1992, rather neutrally, Downcity. (That—and not "downtown"—seems to have been its local designation during its long heyday as the place for the city's shopping and entertainment.) Since the 1980s major redevelopment has augmented preservation efforts through a series of interrelated projects all around the Downcity core and the contiguous Jewelry District to the south.

The core business district is best traveled by foot, whereas most will prefer to drive around the surrounding orbit of redevelopment and the Jewelry District. Kennedy Plaza provides a civic vestibule to two major aspects of the civic center: from two sides into Downcity, of which the Plaza is historically a part; from the other two into the abutting Capital Center redevelopment. For an overview, stand first at the east end of Kennedy Plaza, in front of the Federal Building; from there this guide makes a clockwise examination of the most significant buildings individually.

PR1 Kennedy Plaza (Exchange Place)

1848, 1898, 1908, 1913, 1964, 1984, 2002. Bounded by (clockwise from northwest corner) Exchange Terrace, Exchange St., Fulton St., and Dorrance St.

A large combination park and transportation center, as well as the civic center, Exchange Place (renamed Kennedy Plaza after the president's assassination) was originally a smaller space. It has always been defined by a row of commercial buildings on its south side and, during most of the nineteenth century, by Thomas Tefft's famed Union Depot in the brick Lombard Style (1847–1848; burned 1896) on its north side. In 1878, the completion of Providence City Hall at the area's western end reinforced its importance as the city's heart. The plaza assumed its present configuration in 1898, with the completion of the second (PR6), which (as redeveloped for office and commercial use) is the area's present northern enclosure. The Federal Building (PR2), at the east end, is the symbolic counterweight to City Hall opposite. In the early twentieth century, an axial mall was completed through the cen-

ter of the plaza across the street from City Hall, with a frilly cast iron and glass trolley shelter (1914, Martin and Hall), now attached to an enormous bus waiting room, whose obvious, heavy-handed inspiration by the earlier building mocks rather than complements. The Mall, as it was known originally, and the landscaped park to the north were designed in the aura of the City Beautiful movement, spawned by the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. Along the way, the square acquired two commemorations of the Civil War: a quaintly provincial monument to Civil War soldiers and sailors (1871) by Randolph Rogers, then a respectable equestrian monument (1887) by Launt Thompson, to General (and later Governor) Ambrose Burnside, Rhode Island's contribution to the top command of the Union Army. Sculpturally more interesting, however, is the Bajnotti Fountain, by Enid Yandell, a composition of allegorical figures inflected with Rodinesque Art Nouveau undulation. The plaza assumed its current use as a metropolitan bus interchange in 1984–1985, but the rerouting of buses and construction of waiting areas

in 2002 significantly altered the scale of the open space.

PR2 Federal Building

1906–1908, Clarke and Howe, with Harvey Wiley Corbett as consultant designer. 25 Kennedy Plaza

A fitting pendant to City Hall at the opposite end of the mall (PR4), the gray granite Federal Building, built to hold the U.S. District Court and Customs Service, complements its predecessor in mass and scale. It is as telling an expression of attitudes toward civic architecture in 1908 as was City Hall in the mid-1870s. As a pair they illustrate the influence of French design on American architecture, from City Hall's Second Empire to the Federal Building's academic classicism, derived from Ecole des Beaux-Arts architectural training at the turn of the century. Despite interior renovations, the courtrooms remain intact, one overlooking the plaza with a stained glass window. Flanking the entrance are monumental seated female figures by John Massey Rhind: *Providence* on the left, *America* on the right.

PR3 Fleet Bank Building (Industrial National Bank Building)

1926–1928, Walker and Gillette. 1983–1985, Fleet Center addition, Hellmuth, Obata and Kassabaum. 55 and 28–44 Kennedy Plaza

To build what was then—and for many years remained—the tallest building in New England, the Industrial Trust Company looked to New York both for architects and for formal precedent and constructed what is one of the state's best-known landmarks and still its finest skyscraper. Walker and Gillette were established bank architects, and the stepped-back skyscraper form was just then emerging. The form, dictated in New York by the 1916 zoning laws to allow adequate light and air for adjacent buildings on crowded sites, was unnecessary here. What it provided instead was big-city bravado, a superbly sculptural Art Deco culmination of the Providence skyline in a major example of the setback. Above the ground story, sculptured reliefs celebrate Rhode Island's commercial and industrial history in the half-modernist, half-traditional mode of the period. The twenty-eight-story building is capped by a globe-topped lantern, once graced with masonry eagles (since removed) at each corner. At

night, the building becomes the city's chandelier (or perhaps torchère), demonstrating the exceptional potential of setbacks for floodlighting. The original banking hall, surrounded by an Ionic colonnade and detailed in an Adamesque Art Deco mode, has been modified only by the removal of tellers' cages, installation of replacement chandeliers (which are nonetheless appropriate), and new lobby furniture.

Finally, a curiosity: a sharp eye and a distant vantage point reveal a windowed metal box sitting high on one of the eastern setbacks; its small interior space, which replicates that of the passenger cabin of a zeppelin, suggests its original use as an executive pied-à-terre and perhaps a private bar during Prohibition. (Documentation reveals that the Industrial tower was constructed partly with the intention of it being a mooring-mast for zeppelins, and that the penthouse was intended as the waiting room or terminal for passengers, hence the referential design.) The architects prepared it as their gift to the client. Later a radio station, then a private office, it is now vacant. The victim of requirements for "egress" of modern fire codes (and hence unvisitable), it remains as a dusty, leather-lined relic of a time when skyscrapers, zeppelins, and penthouse studios were glamorous signs of modernity. Kitchen and bar are fitted with meticulous cabinetry into closetlike spaces along the inside wall, and, as in the typical zeppelin lounge of the period, wicker provided its original furnishings. It anticipates the public relations images of the mast of New York's Empire State Building (1929–1931) as a mooring for dirigibles. Persistent rumor has it that a model and photographs of this skyscraper were used for King Kong's destructive ascent to the pinnacle of the 1920s metropolis with Fay Wray in his clutches. Not so: the honor belongs to a skyscraper in Minneapolis.

When Fleet Bank came to enlarge its original building in the early 1980s with the connected Fleet Center, "modern" skyscraper design was in part making a postmodern return to 1920s stepped massing with touches of Art Deco classicism. Architecturally, the new building suffers from mediocre detail. Urbanistically, it attempts, by a glossy arcade with "greenhouse" roofing, to extend the famous Arcade (PR18) across the street. Its interior is calculated to attract the noontime and late afternoon bustle within its famous predecessor, initially without its success, although the potential is there.



PR4 Providence City Hall (left) and Providence Biltmore Hotel (PR5) (right)

PR4 Providence City Hall

1874–1878, Samuel J. F. Thayer. 1914, attic reworked, Jackson, Robertson and Adams. Late 1970s, restoration, Irving B. Haynes and Associates; wall ornamentation in council and aldermen's chambers, Robert Dodge. 25 Dorrance St.

Samuel J. F. Thayer's scheme in the then modish Second Empire style was the outcome of a design competition that drew twenty-one entries—including a French Renaissance-inspired design from the young firm of McKim and Mead (before White joined the team). Thayer's competition entry featured a bombastic center tower which was eliminated in cost-cutting efforts during a crippling economic recession following the Panic of 1873. Nevertheless, as realized, his design introduced to Providence a degree of Victorian monumental grandeur hitherto unseen locally and established a new standard for the city's public and commercial buildings. Its severe, hierarchical granite exterior contains a remarkably intact original interior, including a silver metallic central stairwell and light court with gilt and polychrome trim and fine, elaborately stenciled council and aldermen's chambers on the third floor. The building was threatened with demolition and replacement by a glass box during urban renewal planning efforts in the 1950s and 1960s, and its restoration became a favorite project of Mayor Vincent A. Cianci, Jr., even before his election in 1975. It is one of the best-preserved buildings of its period and type in the country.

PR5 Providence Biltmore Hotel

1920–1922, Warren and Wetmore. 1978–1979 and later, remodeling, Philemon E. Sturges with Morris Nathanson for interiors. 11 Dorrance St.

Almost as symbolic a civic gesture as City Hall across the street, the Biltmore was constructed with funds raised by the Providence Chamber of Commerce to provide the city with modern, first-class hotel accommodations. Warren and Wetmore were well established as architects of stylish hotels, among them the Biltmore, Commodore, and Pennsylvania hotels in New York. The dryly detailed Renaissance ornamentation in brick and limestone, here on an L-plan tower rising from a trapezoidal base, is conventional for hotels of the period. The reworked lobby retains some fine, gilded Adamesque plasterwork at its second-floor level. The top-floor banquet hall and ballroom remains as an exceptional example of festive Neo-Colonial decor such as no eighteenth-century person ever laid eyes upon. The exterior now boasts an express elevator to the roof in a transparent shaft, a feature of a major renovation of the late 1970s that was then much in vogue for hotels, whether incorporated inside or out.

PR6 Union Station Complex

1896–1898, Stone, Carpenter and Willson. 30, 36, 40, 50, 56 Exchange Terrace

When Thomas Tefft's famous mid-century station in the Lombard Romanesque style burned

in 1896, construction of this replacement was already underway. Like many other railroad stations designed following the World's Columbian Exposition, Union Station has a Roman triumphal arch as its centerpiece entrance to the passenger station, which also provides a symbolic gateway to the city. In this instance the grand Neo-Renaissance manner is leavened by construction in yellow brick and a utilitarian aspect overall (rather like that of its predecessor), but distinguished by fine craftsmanship and proportion. The spreading complex of five buildings, once linked by arcades, was reduced to four buildings when fire destroyed the easternmost pavilion in 1940. A simulacrum was completed in 1988 as part of the complex's rehabilitation after this station's abandonment in 1986 for another (PR8.3), required when trackage through Providence was shifted farther north. In 1987, fire also eliminated most of the original interior of the passenger terminal, which was never very sumptuous and was, in any event, scheduled for drastic alteration to accommodate new offices and shops, eventually offices only.

PR7 Federal Building

1938–1940, Jackson, Robertson and Adams. 2 Exchange Terrace

The Federal Building with post office in Depression-era Georgian Revival completes the circuit of civic buildings around Kennedy Plaza. More interesting than the building are some nice Art Deco sculptured panels displaying transportation by car, train, ocean liner, and airplane—a frequent theme for architectural adornment during the 1920s and 1930s when competition among these modes of transportation was at its height and the zip of movement was the very essence of modernity.

PR8 Convention Center and Capital Center Redevelopment Project

1978–, Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (New York office), Marilyn Taylor, project head, with preliminary planning by William Warner Associates (master plan for the area between Kennedy Plaza and the State House); William Warner Associates (river redevelopment plan and design)

Active planning for the Capital Center began in the late 1970s with discussion about the possibility of claiming a roughly 15-acre site stretching from the "Chinese Wall," made by the curve

of the railroad tracks on an elevated embankment into the old Union Station northward to the lawn of the State House. Both the trackage through Providence and its station also required upgrading. What if the money for these improvements could be combined with additional funds to slide the curve of the tracks toward the northern and western edges of the site? The railroad could be given a shorter right of way on ground-level tracks, with a new station built over them at a new, higher artificial grade immediately below the State House. Then the "Chinese Wall" could be eliminated, thereby making available a sizable area for the expansion of the old center city. There were objections, two of particular importance. Some argued that the old station was ideally located at the heart of the city, rather than at some remove from it, as would be its proposed replacement. They also feared that development on the new site could occur only at the expense of the old commercial center. Although much of the old downtown was moribund and in part dilapidated from long and extensive vacancies, it had become the object of passionate concern; many saw that it contained an array of nineteenth- and twentieth-century buildings so exceptional as to be virtually (perhaps actually) unmatched by those in any other medium-sized American city. Not surprisingly, however, expansionist fervor prevailed.

To this initiative for Capital Center add two others, which developed in such an interlocked manner that in effect they became one. First, off the northwest corner of Kennedy Plaza and adjacent to Capital Center, the Convention Center, for trade shows and conferences (PR8.1; 1985 [planning]; 1991–1993, Howard, Needles, Tammen and Berghoff), on Sabin Street, with an adjacent Westin Hotel (PR8.2; 1992–1994, Nichols Partnership), went up beside an existing and lumpish Civic Center (1971–1972, Ellerbee Architects), for sports and entertainment spectacles, and better inside than out. Meanwhile, parallel plans called for improving the banks of the two rivers that mark the southern and eastern boundaries of the Capital Center site—the Woonasquatucket and the Moshassuck—joining at the center of the city to make the Providence River.

Virtually the whole of the north end of the river was bridged by 1905 from a point opposite Old Stone Bank north to, and including, the junction of the Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck Rivers. No aspect of the redevelopment of the central city has been more signifi-

cant. Liberating these rivers from their sewerlike bondage and bridging them into the light of day instantly revived, in a symbolic way at least, one of the great attractions of historic Providence. Precedent for the lower walkway quay close to the river level derived from San Antonio's comparable treatment of the winding course of its river through its downtown as the Riverwalk (although for the most part without its enlivening lower level of shops and restaurants). The prowlike point at the junction of rivers recalls Pittsburgh's Golden Triangle (although without the majestic volumes of water which mark the merging of the Monongahela and the Allegheny to make the Ohio). So Providence is San Antonio—cum—Pittsburgh as a delightful miniature. Given this fact, the heavy-handed, multi-piered postmodern neoclassicism of its new bridging is unfortunate—as though calling up a roll of drums and fanfare to herald a two-foot leap. More appropriate would be the light, elegant spanning of these rivers (in metal, perhaps) with arcs of lights tracing the leap and (if classical allusions are needed) possibly the delight of built-in illuminated obelisks instead of catalog street lamps stuck up on posts off the railings. At the junction of the two rivers, too, the tiny triangular plaza should have been extended by an open, festive lobby beneath the wedge-shaped Citizens Bank building (1989–1991; Jung/Brannen Associates). Yet this is closed and stodgy: the corner turrets at each of the glass building's angles underarticulated, as are the glass walls between; its liver color unprepossessing; its height both insufficiently low for a "palace" and insufficiently tall for a "tower." The miniature quality of the rivers called for a light touch, for common sense mingled with gaiety and finesse; but both the bridges and the principal building are pompous. The glory of small cities should be their smallness. The pressure of large-scale development to overinflate is not a measure of urbanity, but the opposite.

Moving from Kennedy Plaza into the Capital Center site requires crossing Memorial Boulevard and the parallel Woonasquatucket, which together curve around two sides of Kennedy Plaza. An integral part of Capital Center, the boulevard provides the principal access into it from I-95 and I-195. Ironically, its heavy traffic re-creates the Chinese Wall between the old downtown and its intended expansion, which the track relocation was supposed to have razed. As the umbilicus at the center of this redevelopment site, the Woonasquatucket has been

puffed into a granite-lined circular pond to symbolize the ancient treatment of the so-called Cove, which once filled this hollow. Originally the Cove was a pond which, for smaller boats, marked the head of the Providence harbor. As the city grew toward the Cove, its containment within a circle of granite surrounded by a tree-shaded promenade converted its swampy stench and mucky squalor into a park (completed in 1856). Only briefly, however, for wastes from growing industrialization upstream soon returned the Cove to a nauseous, derelict condition. Now, this shrunken token of the larger circle of water that was once there resurrects the memory of a moment of elegance from the city's past and recalls the still larger body of water which was the Cove's original state.

Skidmore, Owings and Merrill's New York office supervised Capital Center's master plan. Its good intentions are evident in provisions for lower buildings close to the State House, with increasing height toward Kennedy Plaza, together with a few (but too few) axial vistas from the old downtown toward the State House dome. Such benefits are substantially undone, however, by the large size of most of the plots, reflecting the demands of developers for more extensive floor areas than those typical before the mechanical delivery of light and air made tolerable (if not always pleasant) deep spaces far from windows. Of the first buildings erected on the old Cove site, only Amtrak's Providence Station escapes the architectural deficiencies—especially chunky massing and banal detail—that beleaguer the Citizens Bank Tower, the American Express Building, and Center Place. Thinly detailed symmetrical schemes in a postmodernist classical mode seem stretched to the limit to wrap the bulk, like gift wrapping mammoth presents.

Of these buildings, Providence Station (PR8.3; 1981–1986, Marilyn Taylor of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, chief designer), 1 Station Place, is architecturally the most significant. Like the Convention Center, it is postmodernist classical in style. Whereas the giant metal-framed glass front of the Convention Center alludes to a classical portico as a frontispiece to the immense box of space behind, the station is a full-round composition of severe geometrical shapes, possibly too unrelieved but nicely proportioned, which designate the essential functions within. A low, spreading box in reinforced concrete houses the waiting room, topped by a low, metal-clad dome. Inset porticoes, their columns simple cylinders, pro-

vide entrance from opposite directions. An up-ended box serves as a clock tower and civic marker. Inside, a monumental oak bench, a segmented circle, echoes the shape of the dome above. Seating on either side is built into its undulant profile, recalling the best of such monumental benches in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century stations. The failure of the low dome to swell directly from the box of the interior space below is a fault. It exists instead in a compartment of space of its own, rather than expanding out of the space below. The rough, grottolike effect of its foamed undersurface, required for acoustics, but at odds with the smooth surfaces all around, is another flaw. Still, this is a worthy successor to the two fine Providence stations which preceded it, providing the city with an image that is distinctive and monumental yet scaled down to current railroad use.

Projected as the climax of Cove area building is Providence Place (PR8.4; 1997–2000, ADD, Inc., architects; Friedrich St. Florian, associate), a colossal shopping mall wedged into the intersection of I-95 and the River Boulevard, directly opposite the Convention Center and its hotel. It also contains four stories of warehouse-like space, compartmentalized into the usual department store "anchors" with shops, restaurants, and theaters in between, all cut through at one point by the mandatory climactic vertical atrium topped by a glass dome. The court and its bubble occur directly over the spot where the Woonasquatucket flows beneath the mall through an oversized, barrel-vaulted orifice. The outermost layer is fronted in classically derived embellishment, much at giant scale, and more seriously conceived than that stretched over earlier office and apartment buildings in Capital Center. The embellishment extends around the southern prow of the complex at the junction of I-95 and Memorial Boulevard. Toward I-95 the mall is walled by parking, like the Convention Center, both curving inward to make the boulevard gorge for access to Capital Center. Is this another Chinese Wall? Will lighting or some other adornment ameliorate the sullen grimness of these parking precipices and beguile the traveler between the Scylla and Charybdis of this new central city?

Even if the current plan is stunted or stymied by economic conditions or its late-1970s direction ultimately changed, Capital Center will interest the architectural pilgrim as a commentary on late twentieth-century urbanism. Has the central city taken its revenge on the suburban

mall? Or is the suburban mall the real winner after all? The collection of shops and other enclosures in this urban mall is decreed by the developer to be the city's "downtown." It is mostly sealed off from the city by basement, bridge, or arcade passages to the hotel, from the hotel to the Convention Center, and from there to the Civic Center. Against the overwhelming scale, self-containment, and floor space of this colossus and its satellites, what is the role of what was downtown? This is our next destination.

PR9 Slade Building and Adjoining Structures

Washington, Eddy, and Union sts.

These three commercial buildings dating from between 1880 and 1910, together with two others which fill the block, have been reworked as office and condominium space. Slade and Balcom long operated a large paint business in the earliest and most conspicuous of the group, the Slade Building (PR9.1; 1881), 38–52 Washington Street (at Eddy Street), a late Victorian brick building trimmed in stone, flush with the wall, making blunt allusions to "Gothic." Its design indicates a concern for well-lighted interiors: the attenuated cast iron, transomed store front (partially extant); the tall, close-packed windows upstairs; and especially the window-filled tower of wooden bays bracketed at the second-floor level off the corner of the building. At two points on each elevation outsized dormers from brick corbeling burst across the mini-mansard bearing stone plaques to celebrate the owner. The six-story Renaissance Revival building adjacent at 55 Eddy Street (PR9.2; 1908) boasts an even more open and attenuated cast iron storefront, beneath two stories of bay windows sheathed in sheet metal. The jutting bay sequence across the third and fourth floors is triangular-rectangular-triangular, all with rounded corners. The spiral stairs of an ornamental fire escape descend into the gullies between them, throwing out tendrils for support to the bays—a rare example of integrating what are customarily excrescences.

Around the block at 112 Union Street is the finest building of the three, although difficult to see in its narrow, shadowed location and too complexly conceived for easy description. The Providence Telephone Building (PR9.3; 1893, Stone, Carpenter and Willson; Norcross Bros., builders) was inspired by Stanford White's elaborately ornamented commercial and club

buildings of the time for McKim, Mead and White in combinations of Roman brick and terra-cotta elaborately embellished with Neo-Renaissance ornament in low relief. Probably the first full-blown example of the turn-of-the-twentieth-century academic Renaissance Revival in downtown Providence, the Telephone Building initiated a series of designs in the same mode that Willson executed here between 1894 and 1900. Although documents suggest its construction in two stages, first to the top of the three-story base (masked as two), then, thirteen years later, three more, the facade seems so much of a piece that the whole elevation must substantially have been designed at the start. A bit overwrought, perhaps, in its ornamented and contrapuntal variety, this facade proclaims the youthful overstimulation of an architect naturally gifted as an ornamentalist, but its forceful organization is also evident. Its merits brought it national publication in *American Architect and Building News* (September 16, 1893).

Sobriety to either side characterizes the other properties in the block. At 56–70 Washington Street, the somber Earle Building (1895) displays a belated Victorian mansard. On Union against the alleylike Fulton Street, the Edwin A. Smith Building (1912, Martin and Hall), at 57–59 Eddy Street, modernizes a nominal Renaissance format with Chicago windows as rationalized for commercial buildings by a group of architects around the turn of the twentieth century in that midwestern metropolis. The successful conversion in 1999 of this building from commercial to residential use was the first of a precedent-setting trend transforming Downcity's traditional retail core.

PR10 Hotel Dreyfuss

1917, remodeling, William Walker and Son. 119 Washington St.

PR11 Packard Motor Company Showroom (Former)

1915, John Hutchins Cady. 202 Washington St.

PR12 Lederer Theatre (Emery's Majestic Theatre)

1917, William Walker and Son. 1971–1973, partial restoration for reuse. 201 Washington St.

Of several examples of terra-cotta in these blocks of Washington Street, first is the Hotel Dreyfuss, which has a colorful terra-cotta cornice with cartouches and other minor terra-cotta touches, part of a remodeling of a plain brick Neo-Renaissance building. The former Packard Motor Company showroom hardly suggests the aura of technological sheen and classy luxuriousness that it once conveyed, the latter still seen in the terra-cotta sheathing of the structure in a bone-white imitation of limestone bejeweled with bits of color. The nearby Johnson and Wales classroom building (PR15) employs the terra-cotta-clad frame to more daring effect; still, this claims attention as a remnant of a standard deluxe auto salon of its period. Its renovation as a restaurant was successfully completed in 1999 (Durkee and Brown, architects).

Best of all is the front of the Lederer Theatre, a fantasy version of the Roman triumphal arch motif. Pastel colors in bone white again, lemon yellow, and lime green make this an exceptionally subtle example of commercial terra-cotta. A delicately detailed two-story lobby topped with a stained glass oval dome has been partially restored. Providence's own George M. Cohan appeared in two productions here before it was converted from stage shows to movies in 1923, reverting to dramatic theater in 1971 as the home of the important regional Trinity Repertory Theatre. It was then that the cavernous, ornamented interior was gutted to provide for two replacement theaters, one above the other, in the stripped bare brick manner prevalent for theater reuse in the early 1970s.

PR13 Providence Public Library

1896–1900, Stone, Carpenter and Willson. 225 Washington St. (at Greene St.) 1953, addition, Howe, Prout and Ekman. 150 Empire St. 1985–1988, interior restoration and remodeling of old section

It is not the bland and conspicuous 1953 addition at the corner of Washington and Empire streets that deserves attention here, but the original Renaissance Revival building behind it on Washington, restored in 1985–1988. Whereas the modernist monumentality of the addition makes the architectural image of the library easily accessible, the renovation of the approach into the original building gives precedence to the ceremony and aura of veneration which the early twentieth century considered appropriate for entry to a major cultural institution.

The example of the Boston Public Library was clearly in the architects' minds, although they saw it dressed not in its severe fifteenth-century Florentine garb, but in finery freely adapted from Jacopo Sansovino's sixteenth-century library in Venice. This is among the handsome translations of the much-imitated Boston building. Boston's granite walls have been translated into yellow brick with stone trim. The extravagant wrought-iron bracketing of McKim, Mead and White's famous clusters of lamps is drastically reduced, spikey and intricate, in keeping with scintillant delicacy and elaboration typical of Willson's ornament. These qualities are evident particularly in the treatment of the roof.

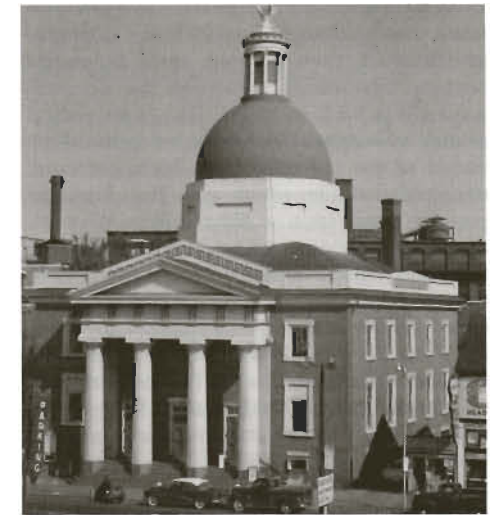
The main stair hall to what is now administrative offices is especially handsome. Columns in polychrome scagliola and brass sconces provide the approach to an upstairs entrance hall, columned and round-arched in the same quattrocento Florentine manner as that at the head of the grand staircase in Boston. Although the semirestored interiors of the original main reading rooms are spatially cramped and somewhat overwrought in detail, Willson, working closely with Librarian William E. Foster, effected a more convenient relationship between reading room and stacks than McKim managed in Boston. When the interior was completely revamped in the 1980s, however, the original relationship of interior arrangements was eradicated.

PR14 Beneficent Congregational Church Complex

PR14.1 Beneficent Congregational Church (Round Top Church; formerly Second Congregational Church)

1809, Bernard Eddy and John Newman, builders. 1836, remodeling, James C. Bucklin. 1857, chancel. 1923–1924, chancel remodeling, William T. Aldrich. 300 Weybosset St. (at Chestnut St.)

Whether viewed theologically or stylistically, Beneficent Congregational Church has an extraordinarily interesting history. Theologically, it resulted from a split of College Hill's First Congregational Church (now First Unitarian Church), the first Congregational gathering established in Providence, when Joseph Snow, Jr., a fiery lay preacher who was also a carpenter by trade, began preaching a more evangelical



PR14.1 Beneficent Congregational Church

brand of Congregationalism than the staid members of the church could tolerate. Eventually, Father Snow, as his ardent adherents came to refer to their pastor of nearly fifty years, established a second congregation on the west side of the Providence River in what was then an area of scattered residences and farms. There, in 1744, Father Snow's background as a carpenter and the enthusiastic support of other builders and his congregation combined to erect a meeting house box of 36 feet by 40 feet, in clapboard with a spire, on the very site where the present church now stands. In 1791 the by then aging Father Snow was joined by the Reverend James Wilson as assistant pastor. Wilson was an Irish emigré imbued with the teachings and spirit of John Wesley. Now it was the turn of Father Snow and his adherents to be offended by evangelical intensity. History repeated itself, and the old rebel again exited with his flock and established yet another Congregational grouping, leaving Beneficent Church (as it came to be called in 1785) to almost another fifty years of preaching from the fiery "Paddy" Wilson.

Additions to the middle and rear of the original box, plus a new floor beneath for Sunday school and parish activities could not contain the audience for Wilson's ardor, augmented by the growth of a substantial village around the church. The old building was demolished. Finally, in 1809 a new church was erected (opening on New Year's Day of 1810), broadened and elongated from the meeting house formula to

75 by 91 feet, in the Adam style, in brick with stone trim (although the brick was originally whitewashed, then painted, until twentieth-century "restoration" returned the accumulated layers back to brick). The most radical change in its appearance occurred in the elimination of the old spire for a high, centered, once-gilded dome, which gave Beneficent its popular designation as Round Top. What accounted for the change? Legend has it that the Reverend Wilson wanted to recall the domed Custom House in Dublin, which had been dedicated shortly before his emigration to America. Round Top as originally designed, however, also had affinities to Charles Bulfinch's domes, such as that on the Massachusetts State House (1795–1798). So Irish memories and contemporary New England Adam style could have melded in its treatment.

The exterior as we now see it is the Adam style building Grecianized by James Bucklin in 1836, a modernization almost wholly confined to the exterior of the church, with the auditorium end inside left pretty much as the two-story balconied box of the 1809 remodeling. Bucklin transformed whatever was attenuated in the original Adamesque building into brusque, sculptural Greek Doric monumentality. "Greek" included here, as in other examples of the Greek Revival, allusions to Egyptian forms in the slight taper of the outside edges of the window frames to recall the similar shaping of openings in certain Egyptian temples. A comparable breadth of moldings and surface in the two styles wed the Nile to the Acropolis in the taste of the period, while the sense of both civilizations as remote founts of Western culture also appealed to the romantic sentiment of the times.

Bucklin's Greek modifications included the compactly proportioned Doric portico in wood, which dramatically responds to the curve and rise of Weybosset Street; the paneled effects around the base of the dome; the eaves-edge parapeting, also paneled but accented by bold Greek fret patterns; and, surmounting all, the cupola, penetrated by a Corinthian column based on the Choragic Monument of Lysicrates in Athens, which now crowns the dome.

Because music was a cardinal aspect of Beneficent's evangelical tradition, important interior renovations included a series of organ upgradings. The initial organ of 1825 went into the choir balcony at the entrance end of the church. It disappeared when, in 1857, the upper portion of the opposite wall was opened

to a chancel to give a new Victorian organ and the choir greater prominence in the service. This was lost, in turn, when Mr. and Mrs. John D. Rockefeller, Jr., gave the present organ, a much grander instrument, in memory of her mother, Abby Pierce Aldrich. In 1923 the family called in architect William T. Aldrich, a brother of Mrs. Rockefeller, to design the organ case in a flamboyant manner, reminiscent of Sir Christopher Wren's work, as a backdrop to tiers of choir stalls stepped down and behind the opposed tiering and pyramiding of balustrades and stairs to a low, central pulpit at the front of the choir. Aldrich's embellishment is absolutely at odds with the pew area left over from the 1809 Adam style church, as though rebuking its plainness by way of advertising how much an architect with academic training and a sophisticated knowledge of "styles" could improve on the work of lesser-trained predecessors. Arrogance and disparity notwithstanding, however, no chancel design in the state is more expressively musical than this.

Three other items over the pew area are worth notice. Oldest is the 1826 clock on the gallery front, made by the famed Simon Willard, the "Babcock" on its face referring to a local mid-century repairer. The Victorian crystal chandelier of Austrian glass is one of several gifts from the textile magnate Henry J. Steere. He also donated another organ to a downstairs chapel. Finally, in 1959, Steere's gift was moved to the entrance gallery to serve as an echo for the Rockefeller instrument up front, but now wrapped in a new rosewood case which replicated that of the 1825 organ. So the present echo is not only sonic, but stylistic as well, suggesting (at least temporarily) a full circle back to the start of the to-and-fro shift of organ pipes which has contributed such an exhausting and lovely aspect to the history of this interior.

PR14.2 Beneficent House

1963–1969, Paul Rudolph. 1 Chestnut St.

As dean of the School of Architecture at Yale University, Paul Rudolph was influential in the design of large, multiple-unit housing projects during the 1960s. He and others rebelled against the monotony, inflexibility, and impersonality of the elemental building shapes preferred by earlier modernists for apartments and mass housing. Influenced especially by Le Corbusier's emphasis, in his late Unité apartment houses, on defining the unit within the

whole, and by current theories on the design of megastructures from discrete increments, Rudolph had pioneered in this approach to housing for married students at Yale and for the elderly in New Haven. Hence the push and pull of form in this commission from the Beneficent Church for a housing project for senior citizens. Horizontal banding in concrete across the brick walls, in a manner sometimes used by Le Corbusier, marks off floor levels and serves, like a musical staff, as a means to organize the architectural elements. This banding also indicates a tentative return to favor of polychromatic walls in the manner of such Victorian examples as the Wilcox Building (PR20). Disagreements over the cost and convenience of Rudolph's original, more complex scheme led to its simplification. Even as compromised, however, the result is an innovative example of an important late modernist point of view toward housing design—as well as an attractive and comfortable apartment building, with a surprising reticence which encourages one to overlook what deserves notice.

PR14.3 Daniel Arnold House

c. 1826, John Holden Greene. 33 Chestnut St.

This cubical brick house in the Federal style with a monitor-on-hip-roof is typical for its architect. Now an adjunct to Beneficent Congregational Church, it is the only survivor of a row of four that stood nearby on Westminster Street. Moved and cursorily restored in 1967, it incorporates the modified Palladian window and chimneypieces from a now-demolished Greene house in Pawtucket.

PR14.4 Abbott Park

1746, 1873, 1927. 286 Weybosset St.

Unlike New England settlers in most communities outside Rhode Island, the founders of Providence set aside no centrally located town green. For the eighteenth-century predecessor to Round Top, one of the members of this congregation, Daniel Abbott, donated its as a "true New England common," albeit a tiny one, for many years no more than a grassy area extending from the church. A cast iron fountain surrounded by cast iron fencing (long since removed) was added in 1873 and restored toward its 1873 condition c. 1990. This was the first private donation of a public park to the city.

PR15 Johnson & Wales College Classroom Building (Summerfield Building)

1913, Albert Harkness. 274 Weybosset St.

Albert Harkness inaugurated his fifty-year Rhode Island architectural career with this extraordinary six-story building, which he designed as an investment property for his family. He seems never again to have done anything much like it. Its original name derived from a Boston furniture company which long operated a Providence branch. The state's first reinforced concrete-frame commercial and office building, it still astonishes for its expansive use of plate glass and the reduction of the "wall" to a skeletal minimum clad in tightly fitted, polychromatic terra-cotta impressed with delicate Neo-Renaissance ornament. A strongly projecting slab incisively terminates the elevations. Rising from the skimpiest spandrel clear to the ceiling, the huge expanses of glass work in concert with the minimal frame to flood the interior with light (a necessity before the advent of fluorescent fixtures). This skeletonized wall also reduces building weight for savings in foundation and materials. The glazed tile provides for colorful, inexpensive molded embellishments applied as prefabricated, modular units requiring, except in the sootiest conditions, no more than rainwater to restore their sparkle.

Such construction for commercial buildings was widespread from the 1880s onward but is associated with Chicago, where examples were ubiquitous—so much so that the three-part horizontal window unit consisting of a fixed center sheet, often the size of a shop window and flanked by narrower sections that open for ventilation, came to be known as the "Chicago window." Here, variants appear toward the rear of the side elevation. Up front, however, Harkness more than doubled the span of the Chicago window—so testing the limits of possibility for this feature that, here and there, thicker mullions have been added at halfway points to counteract threatened structural failure.

PR16 Providence Performing Arts Center (Loew's State Theatre)

1928, Rapp and Rapp. 1975–1978, restoration. 220 Weybosset St.

Concealed behind an embellished but unremarkable facade that shows a mild Spanish influence in what might be called 1920s Pla-

teresque is one of the best-preserved monumental movie theater interiors of its period in New England. It was designed by a specialist firm notable across the country for movie houses in hybrid styles. The vestibule and main lobby are vintage movie-palace baroque, handled with more restraint (or a smaller budget) than in many other Rapp and Rapp theaters. Here the auditorium is the important feature. As the appropriate motif for a Providence theater, the decorous fantasy of New England's own Federal style envelops the space. Not the skimpy plaster ornaments of Bulfinch's prim Boston interiors, however: rather, the architects retreated to the source for Bulfinch's inspiration, engravings of Robert Adam's grandest salons for his most impressive town and country houses. Rapp and Rapp, however, had no qualms about consistency of style if an exotic interjection could heighten the final effect. So tent-roofed mini-buildings conjuring Eastern exoticism flank the stage as simulated boxes projecting from niches. They flatten out to become aediculated door frames around the fire exits on the side walls, topped by broken scroll pediments, between the stubs of which rococo foliage undulates to climactic wreaths around busts, much as Adam decorated many of his entrances into what he termed his "grand saloons." Still it is the spread of Adamesque ornament across the domical enclosure which prevails. Disks and half disks of various sizes, patterned in various ways and underpinned by an interwoven lattice (more Plateresque perhaps than Adamesque) skim the curved surfaces, which are edged by decorated banding, with the banding predominating as the space funnels toward the stage-screen focus. At the summit, an oval orifice breaks through to another smooth-surfaced saucer dome above it, which is circled by lights concealed in the coving. In this other realm, seemingly beyond the space it closes, a changing pool of iridescent light accompanies the moods of the mighty Wurlitzer, risen from its tomb in the basement.

PR17 Atlantic Bank Building

c. 1866. 1977–1978, rehabilitation, James Estes. 75 Weybosset St.

This tiny "Elizabethan-style" stone building features round-arched windows and an ornate bracketed cornice surmounted by bulbous urns. That so diminutive a commercial build-



PR16 Providence Performing Arts Center (Loew's State Theatre)



PR18 The Arcade

ing of such antiquity should have survived in such pristine condition is miraculous.

PR18 The Arcade

1828, James C. Bucklin and Russell Warren. 1978–1980, restoration-renovation, Irving B. Haynes and Associates. 65 Weybosset St. through to 130 Westminster St.

The Arcade, financed and built by local merchant Cyrus Butler and the Arcade Corporation, remains one of the key Greek Revival monuments in the country. It is the only remaining American arcade in the style, although it followed the precedent of enclosed shopping arcades in the Greek manner in Europe and, closer to home, those by John Haviland in New York and Philadelphia. James Bucklin and Russell Warren studied Haviland's arcades, both of which are gone. The south (Weybosset Street) elevation retains the stepped parapeting of the

portico originally intended for both elevations. Revisions to the building program after construction began resulted in the addition of a third story of shops and a triangular pediment to the north (Westminster Street) elevation facing toward the heart of the city. (Although the true reason for the change remains a mystery, the theory of a friendly "competition" between the two designers is now generally discounted.) Remarkably, the cylinders for the Ionic columns in antis are granite monoliths hauled by oxen from Johnston quarries some twenty miles away. Rubble party walls connect the granite porticoes. These walls are not contained within the narrow rectangle the Arcade appears to occupy, but project as stubby wings on either side near the center, making the plan of the Arcade not rectangular, but a stubby-armed cross.

The interior is little changed in essence, despite modifications in detail. Especially worth notice is the stepping back of the three floor levels so that each opens directly to the skylight above, with the space of the ground-floor corridor expanding outward as one looks up. The enlivening counterplay between Greek-inspired ornament and the broad wall surfaces typical of the Greek Revival style is brilliantly evident here in the filigree of cast iron and wrought iron hand railings set against the austere geometry of the masonry. The bridge across the center and upper-story shop fronts was added in the nineteenth century, modified in the twentieth, and retained in the 1978–1980 restoration partly because no images of the original interior have been found and partly to retain what is in itself a charming modification. In the restoration similar shop fronts on the ground floors were opened up by folding screens to create flow through a mix of eateries which merchandisers wanted; fortunately this arrangement could also be justified by accounts stating that a comparable marketlike openness did, in fact, characterize what was initially there.

The sensitivity of the restoration is evident not only in what was brought back and what was adapted, but also in what is evidently new, like the handsome redesign of the floor pattern. Especially challenging is the enclosure by glass walls of what, previous to the rehabilitation, was draftily open. Many feared the enclosures would become a coarse, disruptive barrier; but it is worth examining how elegantly and unobtrusively they are fitted to the building, even elegantly curved to the outside of the columns with which they are aligned in order to pre-

serve the integrity of their cylindrical shapes. Making no apologies for their modernity and handsome in themselves, the glass enclosures deserve to be honored because of the honor they bring to their task.

Directly across the street, the reticent screening of a parking garage (1980s, Gilbane Building Company) by a local construction firm can be commended. Opposite this, at 45–53 Weybosset Street, is another restored Victorian commercial block, Halls Building (1876, refurbished 1981), severely brick and stone trimmed with another fine cast iron storefront.

PR19 Bank of North America (Former)

1856, Thomas A. Tefft. 48 Weybosset St.

This, the Wilcox and Equitable buildings, and the Federal Building (see the next three entries) represent a particularly handsome and varied sequence of mid-to-late Victorian commercial buildings in conjunction with an important public institution for the city's commerce. They also demonstrate the downtown scale of the medium-sized American city in the mid-nineteenth century. The Bank of North America is the only remaining commercial block by Tefft (save for a much-altered bank in Taunton, Massachusetts), although the substantial archive of his drawings owned by Brown University and the Rhode Island School of Design contains many similar designs for commercial buildings. Tefft was among the early proponents in America of the full-fledged Italian palace front. Growing European enthusiasm for the revival of the Italian Renaissance palace format in its various national manifestations began as early as the 1820s in Germany and the late 1820s in England, where it remained fashionable throughout the 1840s, when Tefft came to know of it; the A. T. Stewart Department Store in New York (1846) provided the first conspicuous American example of what became the ubiquitous nineteenth-century "commercial palace." From Tefft's elevation drawing for this bank we know that its ground story was originally heavily rusticated and penetrated by three large, arched openings for a central window flanked by entrances into the bank and up to offices above. This heavy treatment would seem to have been more appropriate to the ponderousness typical of much Victorian palatial detailing than to the delicacy of Tefft's treatment, still remaining in the upper stories. Screened by fire escapes, its brownstone face painted to cover

grime, the elevation nevertheless reveals Tefft's refined and restrained attention to detail and his fine proportioning of wall openings with a full array of Renaissance window capping to provide mild variety across the surface, all incisively framed by the quoining and cornice. The identification of the long defunct bank appears beneath the cornice with the precision of an elegantly engraved Victorian letterhead.

PR20 Wilcox Building

1875, Edwin L. Howland. 42 Weybosset St.

This is the city's best High Victorian Gothic commercial building in what was sometimes derided at the time as the English "streaky bacon" mode of polychromatic contrast, employing the most commonplace combination of materials found in Victorian masonry buildings: red brick and near-white stone. The aggressive enlargement of the light, decorative trim vis-à-vis the dark walls intensifies the "streaky" aspect of the analogy, like bacon more white fat than red meat. The architectural result is ambiguity as to whether the "trim" is meant to predominate over the "wall." Actually, the use of the natural textures and colors of diverse materials for their intrinsic decorative effect—in this case stone, brick, and stubby column shafts in polished granite—follows John Ruskin's admonitions. Insofar as any style can be attached to this front, it would be the Italianate "Gothic" he recommended for urban buildings because of its pointed arches and cusped and crocketed forms. Here, however, these are stretched, butted, sliced, and, finally, pinched into prickly profiles to create what the mid-nineteenth century hoped might become a "modern Gothic." If the result seems eccentric today, the idea was conceived in a progressive spirit, with far-reaching implications for subsequent architectural design in emphasizing the use of materials for their texture and color effect. The Wilcox Building has an L plan which wraps around the slightly earlier and adjacent Equitable Building. Its subordinate elevation on Custom House Street is much more subdued. The interior was gutted by fire in early 1975, and the building's restoration helped to focus community concern on downtown preservation.

PR21 Equitable Building

1872, Walker and Gould and Builders Iron Foundry. 36 Weybosset St.



PR21 Equitable Building, center, with the Federal Building (U.S. Customhouse) (PR22), left, and the Wilcox Building (PR20) and former Bank of North America (PR19), right and far right

Few buildings with full facades in cast iron remain in Providence; this is by far the best of those that do and the best preserved. The "Venetian" facade was cast locally by the city's leading architectural foundry. The polychrome exterior was restored to what appears to have been something like its original paint scheme in the early 1980s. So this row of three buildings displays three stylistic variations popular for mid-nineteenth-century commercial blocks which also represent contrasting yet typical nineteenth-century approaches to the renovation of history to make modern buildings. The first identified the specific type from the past that most precisely met the new functional needs and made it a standard. The second adopted a preferred style from the past and manipulated it into a "modern" version of itself. The third chose a style from the past with characteristics, like the expansive windows and minimal walls of certain late Gothic and Renaissance Venetian palaces, which lent themselves to bold translation into new nineteenth-century materials and technology.

Equitable Insurance seems to have taken a progressive attitude toward its buildings at the time. It was in the vanguard in erecting a skyscraper for its New York company headquarters in the 1870s. For this local office it chose to build in a new material, which also offered easy assembly from bolting together prefabricated cast panels. The Equitable also preserves the Victorian custom of locating a shop a half flight down and the principal business floor a half flight up, thereby giving both levels visibility

from the sidewalk and doubling the landlord's income from "street level" rentals.

PR22 Federal Building (U.S. Customhouse)

1855–1857, Ammi B. Young. 24 Weybosset St.

Built at the edge of the Providence River when port activity was immediately adjacent, the Federal Building originally housed customs, the federal district court, and other federal offices. As architect for the Treasury Department in the mid-nineteenth century, Ammi B. Young supervised the design of federal buildings from Maine to Texas, many of which employ some variant of a granite block in the format of an Italianate Renaissance palace. Like this one, they tend to be larger in scale than their neighbors and severely detailed with only such elements as quoined corners, belt courses as ledges on which to align the windows, and bold, simplified moldings. Custom houses were pioneer building types for architectural fireproofing. Hence construction is wholly in masonry, with interior iron beams carried on the masonry walls, arched brick floors between the beams, iron shutters against external conflagration, and handsome iron stairs to the upper stories lushly ornamented in motifs more Grecian than Italian. In the third-story federal courtroom, a finely carved, gilded wooden eagle, shrieking and poised for flight, remains in the round-arched niche above the erstwhile place for the judge's bench. From a distance, the contained quality of the block may appear to be somewhat compromised architecturally (if made more arresting) by the cast-iron dome perched atop its low hipped roof. The dome was conceived after construction began, as documents in the National Archives indicate, because of last-minute local Congressional pressure to dignify the upstairs courtroom and upgrade the building to exterior view above customhouses at less important ports, like that at Bristol (BR15).

In 1854 Thomas Tefft had prepared alternate schemes for the customhouse as either a Venetian or a Florentine palace, preserved in the collection of his drawings at Brown University. Although the building was delayed after Tefft's submission, he probably would have had little chance for the commission against the Office of the Supervising Architect.

PR23 Banigan Building

1896, Winslow and Wetherall. 10 Weybosset St.

Hailed as the first tall, steel-frame, "fireproof" building in Providence, the ten-and-one-half-story granite-sheathed Banigan Building was built on speculation by Joseph Banigan, founder of a large plant for rubber goods in Woonsocket and eventually also one of the founders of U.S. Rubber when his company went into the giant conglomerate. The layered vertical organization of its Neo-Renaissance exterior is typical of office buildings at the turn of the twentieth century. The rusticated base of the building shows the measurements of downtown flooding from Narragansett Bay in the "great" hurricanes of September 21, 1938 (the worst), and August 31, 1954 (merely horrendous).

PR24 Turk's Head Building

1913, Howells and Stokes. 17 Weybosset St.

The Turk's Head Building, erected by the Brown family as an investment property, is a squat version of Daniel Burnham's recently completed Flatiron Building (1902) in New York, although the angle here is less acute and the wall treatment less florid. Like the New York building, this uses its wedge-shaped corner site to dramatic advantage, interacting dynamically with the taller, boxier competition nearby. Originally, when it was the tallest building downtown, its seventeen stories served as a prow for the entire business district to a viewer descending into it from College Hill. A ship's figurehead located on a former building at the site was a landmark in this vicinity, as commemorated by the effigy at the prow of the Turk's Head Building's three-story base.

PR25 Exchange Bank Building

1888, Stone, Carpenter and Willson. 59 Westminster St.

A rare local commercial essay in the Queen Anne mode, the Exchange Bank has a fussy, bay-windowed exterior that fragments the mass and makes the building appear as a series of overblown late nineteenth-century china cabinets stacked one on another. Nonetheless, its whimsical charm ensured its rehabilitation as part of the Fleet Center complex (PR3), to which it is connected on its west side. It beautifully demonstrates the virtue of small buildings among tall ones in giving light, air, and (especially where the building is as delightfully de-

tailed as this) human scale to the adjoining spaces of the street hub and the rectangular plaza of the skyscraper across the way.

PR26 Sovereign Bank Complex (Rhode Island Hospital Trust National Bank)

1917–1919, York and Sawyer. 15 Westminster St. 1971–1973, tower, John Carl Warnecke and Associates. 1 Financial Plaza

It is the late-twentieth-century tower that dominates, although its early-twentieth-century predecessor next door is architecturally more exceptional, especially inside. But pause momentarily to observe the quality of the architectural frieze that differentiates the base of the older building from the office floors above, and its even finer equivalent around Turk's Head. Both are doubtless machine carved and are unexceptional among the finest classical architectural ornament at the beginning of the twentieth century; but try to match such quality today. York and Sawyer provided this eleven-story palazzo in a vaguely Italianate Neo-Renaissance mode for the financial institution founded in the 1860s as the financial advisor and depository for the endowment of the state's largest hospital. Then also the state's largest bank, it went to New York for an architecture firm which probably designed more banks on a lavish scale than any other during the first decades of the twentieth century. A coffered, barrel-vaulted corridor, handsomely detailed, leads past a bank of elevators with exceptionally fine cast bronze doors in openwork depicting an arcadian setting in which partially draped female figures merge with lush vegetation. Reputedly, these are by Daniel Chester French. If so, this commission must owe something to the sculptor's earlier work for the nearby Union Trust Building (PR29). Halfway along the elevator bank, a right-angle turn gives entrance to the center of the rectangular banking hall at the midpoint of one of its long walls. Just inside each of these walls, ranges of luxurious Corinthian columns flank the banking space and support a coffered barrel vault between them. The original patterned pavement in marble was slightly lifted to provide space for subfloor wiring when the hall was converted to open-plan office space in 1974, and the original bronze and glass banking furniture has almost all been replaced.

Next door, the plaza setback from Westminster Street, as much a nod to New York zoning

laws of the 1960s as the Industrial National Bank's stepped-back form was to the law of 1916, permits a sheer rise to the sleek, boxy, travertine-sheathed high-rise tower. Inside the banking room, outsized planes of polished marble in black and tan are encased in more travertine. The plaza, with benches and fountains by local sculptor Howard Ben Tré, was completed in 1998, the year in which Hospital Trust was acquired by Bank Boston.

PR27 Merchants Bank Building

1855–1857, Alpheus C. Morse and Clifton A. Hall. 20 Westminster St.



Diagonally opposite the old Hospital Trust Building on Westminster Street is another relic of the scale of Providence banking of an earlier day. This and the Bank of North America (PR19) introduced the Italianate palace as a popular mid-nineteenth-century image for commercial buildings, and the two remain the only pre-Civil War downtown survivors of a commercial type destined to have prolonged effect. At six stories, the Merchants Bank Building was long the tallest building in the city and the first to be retrofitted with an elevator. Like Thomas Tefft before them, Morse and Hall graduated the treatment of their features from ground floor to roof. Turk's Head nicely responds to its wedge shape as an opposed wedge. One creates a funnel into the plaza hub; the

other, one out of it. And, like the Exchange Bank Building (PR25), this also demonstrates the urbanistic value of the pigmy building among giants.

PR28 Lauderdale Building and Francis Building

1894, Stone, Carpenter and Willson (both). 1977, rehabilitation of Lauderdale Building, Michael Ertel. 144 and 150 Westminster St.

Two unrelated clients engaged the same firm at the same time to design adjacent speculative office buildings. Edmund Willson did these buildings fresh from his design of the Providence Telephone Building in Stanford White's tawny, scintillant brick and terra-cotta Neo-Renaissance manner and just before he began to design the Providence Public Library. Of the two, the Lauderdale is the more completely clad in terra-cotta. Beneath its shimmering surface one also senses how lightly these materials cover the underlying steel frame, which appears at the ground floor in all its linear nakedness except that the supporting metal frame is also sheathed, here by ornamented metal plates. In a more conservative manner, the Lauderdale anticipates Albert Harkness's daring interpretation of the terra-cotta-sheathed skeleton in his Summerfield Building (PR15). The adjoining masonry elevation, predominantly stone with some brick, is still more conservative, both in the greater prominence of its masonry wall and in the greater restraint of its ornament, much of this in terra-cotta. Whereas Willson employed terra-cotta as overall sheathing for the Lauderdale Building, he used it more discreetly as trim for the Francis Building. The two are handsome complements, all the more for their different approaches to the ornamented facade.

PR29 Union Trust Company Building

1900–1901 and later, Stone, Carpenter and Willson, interior by Clarence Luce. 1981, restoration. 62 Dorrance St. (at Westminster St.)

For this twelve-story business block in limestone and red brick, the first skyscraper in Providence to use the classical base-shaft-capital organization for tall buildings, Stone, Carpenter and Willson ventured into Neo-Georgian with some French Rococo touches. Like the same firm's Union Station (PR6), this also features a

triumphal arch as an entrance motif through the rusticated lower floors. *Indian* and *Puritan*, reclining figures by Daniel Chester French, cap the portal, giving a new iconography to Michelangelo's Medici Chapel figures *Night* and *Day*. But it is the tall screen of rococo-inspired windows, each with a stained glass medallion of one of the great international banking firms through history, which catches the eye both outside and in. The glitter of the emblems enhanced Clarence Luce's use of a variety of colored marbles in the banking hall, all nicely restored except for the elimination of tellers' cages and some changes of wall color. Luce probably garnered this commission from a number of designs for Newport houses. Marsden J. Perry, the president of Union Trust Company, who commissioned this building, gave other significant commissions to its principal architects.

PR30 Providence Journal Building (Former)

1906, Peabody and Stearns. 1983–1984, restoration, Estes-Burgin. 203 Westminster St. (northeast corner of Eddy St.)

When this building was "modernized" in 1955 by a flush encasement in enameled metal panels, the ornament and the original shop windows were buried, only to be resurrected in the mid-1980s. Fiberglass molded in casts made from existing details now patches whatever ornament the support structure for the modernist shrouding had defaced. The Flemish Baroque vocabulary, related to the firm's work in Boston for the Driscoll and Chandler stores, is wed to steel-frame construction. Originally, small electric lights outlined the elaborate frames for the shop windows at night, a not uncommon treatment at the time, reflecting early fascination with a new technology. In their choice of such a highly ornamented petite palace to celebrate Rhode Island's principal newspaper, its publishers and architects seem to have emulated McKim, Mead and White's famous landmark for the *New York Tribune*, which was also two-storied and also luxuriantly Neo-Renaissance (albeit Florentine rather than Flemish).

PR31 Westminster Street Shopping District

c. 1870–1940. Westminster St. from Dorrance St. to Mathewson St.; 139 Mathewson St.

It takes some peering and imagination to sense the role these few blocks, now faded and mostly

vacant, once played in Providence. Above the renovated street level, the early Art Deco O'Gorman Building (PR31.1; 1925), 220–226 Westminster Street, in brick and terra-cotta, makes an effort at sophistication with a terra-cotta peacock perched on the ledge that demarcates the two-story base of shop windows from the upper stories. Too small for the message it means to convey, it is easily missed. Its "tail" extends as a thin blue line, like the mercury column of the thermometer, up the center support for the four upper stories to the tail feathers' "eyes," ranged along a curve of a half-ovoid terra-cotta frieze, which the parallel curve of the cornice echoes immediately above. The fantastic ornamentation, ritualized eroticism and (to human eyes) dandyish decadence of the male peacock made him a favorite in Art Deco ornithology. Next door, at 228–232 Westminster Street, the Burgess Building (PR31.2; 1870, George Waterman Cady) displays a suavely Parisian cluster of bonnet dormers against its steep mansard. Triplet windows have Neo-Renaissance frames, their details variously stretched and pinched in the Victorian manner. Exceptional is the tubular, copper-sheathed bay window with latticelike panes which pops from the center of the elevation, possibly a later Queen Anne addition to a Second Empire facade.

Next is the hulk of the former Shepard Department Store (PR31.3; 1870s; expansions and additions, 1880, 1885, 1896, 1903), at 259 Westminster, marked by two-story arched porches with entrance doors on an oblique angle inset into the corners of Union Street, at both Westminster and Washington streets, one block north. Like many other department stores of its period, Shepard's expanded higgledy-piggledy into additions and adjacent buildings until it virtually filled the whole of two city blocks by bridging over an alley. It was refurbished in 1994 for the University of Rhode Island College of Continuing Education, which lost its site to the Providence Mall at Capital Center.

In the early 1960s several blocks of Westminster Street were closed to vehicles to make a pedestrian mall with Shepard's as its focal point in a last-ditch effort to lure shoppers from suburban malls and return them downtown. But Shepard's was sold to a conglomerate, and soon slaughtered as a "cash cow" which was drying up. Westminster Mall, in two iterations, eventually gave way to a reopened street, gussied up with patterned brick sidewalks and stone pedestrian crossings. This crusty hulk

stands as a reminder of its "anchor," the suavest of Providence's early twentieth-century department stores, with a street floor that featured fine commercial cabinetry to the very end.

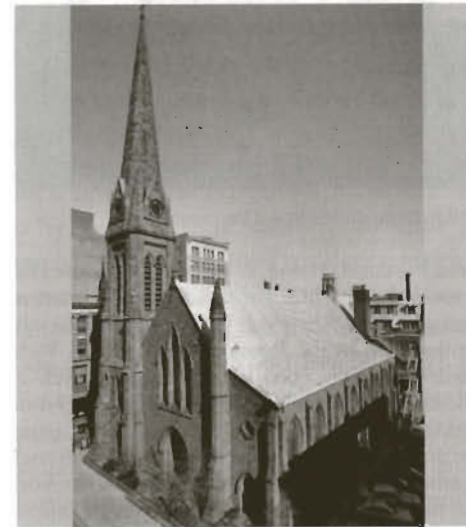
The outstanding commercial building of this group, immaculately preserved by the most eminent jewelry retailer in what is sometimes called Jewelry City (see under Jewelry District, below), is the Tilden-Thurber Building (PR31.4; 1895, Shepley, Rutan and Coolidge), 292 Westminster Street (corner of Mathewson Street), which remained the final elitist holdout in the collapse of the street's former reputation. After more than a century in business, its original occupant surrendered to bankruptcy in 1990, and the successive owner sympathetically adapted it to another luxury business. The ornament of these terra-cotta surfaces is larger in scale and more deeply modeled than most of the examples described so far, with Venetian palaces as the source of inspiration. Its Neo-Renaissance sumptuousness appropriately invokes a jewel box. Appropriate too is its allusion to similar Fifth Avenue palazzi in New York, designed by McKim, Mead and White for Tiffany's and for Providence's own Gorham, where, as here, very open two-story showrooms contrast with the treatment for the floors devoted to offices and workshops upstairs. Across the street, at 291 Westminster (corner of Mathewson Street), the Burrill Building (PR31.5; 1891, Stone, Carpenter and Willson), also in the Neo-Renaissance style, borrows from the same McKim, Mead and White palazzo prototype, but with more modest means. The incrustation of Tilden-Thurber becomes a carefully proportioned interplay of brick and stone, culminating under the cornice in a simple but handsome inset checkerboard of brick as a decorative rectangular field. Here Edmund Willson shows his strong grounding in Charles McKim's more austere approach to design in his sure sense for the decisive, well-proportioned organization of the elevation. Intrinsic versus incrustated embellishment—or Florence and Venice on opposite sides of Westminster Street.

Half a block west into Mathewson Street, at number 139, is the Lederer Building (PR31.6; 1897, M. J. Houlihan, builder), an earlier and cruder interpretation of the Renaissance palace extended to mini-skyscraper height. The copper-clad bay windows of this Victorian holdover puff from the sheer, yellow brick walls, with more sheet metal work in the copper cornice and the tall, spindly cast iron front ex-

travagantly infilled with plate glass at the ground. Commercial skyscrapers of this early vintage rarely exist so little changed, even to the terra-cotta corner cartouche which labels the building.

PR32 Grace Church

1845–1860, Richard Upjohn. 1912, remodeling and parish house addition, Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson. 1950, addition enlarged, Albert Harkness. 175 Mathewson St. (at Westminster St.)



Grace Church, which dominated a prestigious residential community when built, interrupts these architectural mementos of Providence's onetime shopping scene. With a tower off one corner, it is one of the country's earliest asymmetrical Gothic Revival churches (some have risked calling it *the* first). This was the first of several ecclesiastical commissions Richard Upjohn carried out in Rhode Island. As modified and expanded by the later chancel extension and parish house, the complex combines two predominant approaches to the Gothic in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: the doctrinal English parish Gothic of Upjohn and the more urbane Collegiate Gothic, a self-consciously aesthetic English Perpendicular, of Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson. Inside, Upjohn used an exposed timber roof construction to support a gable roof over the nave, with side aisles vaulted in plaster. Upjohn was an ardent Episcopalian himself and the most prominent architect member of the American offshoot of

the British Ecclesiological Society, which called for a return to medieval forms as those of the "true" church. His Grace Church, with its long nave, side aisles, lack of balcony, and "dim religious light" from stained glass, opposes such luminous preaching boxes of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as the First Baptist Church and the First Unitarian Church (PR56, PR92). A diverse and impressive collection of stained glass from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries fills the windows, including a Tiffany window (on the left, third from the entrance) and several by Reynolds, Francis and Rohnstock. The fifth window in the same wall, removed to this location when the chancel was deepened in 1911–1912, incorporates medallions from the original chancel window.

As often in Cram's revisions of earlier medieval revivalist efforts, his chancel alteration makes little attempt to blend with Upjohn's work. In its refinement of archaeological detail, it seems rather to rebuke what came before, as did William Aldrich with his later redesign of the choir and pulpit area of Beneficent Congregational Church. Medieval churches offer much precedent for this sort of one-upmanship; but frequently, as here, it is the earlier work that holds most visitors' attention.

PR33 Conrad Building

1886, Stone, Carpenter and Willson. 1988, restoration. 375 Westminster St.

PR34 Caesar Misch Building

1903, Martin and Hall. 400 Westminster St.

Of all extant Queen Anne commercial facades in the city, the Conrad Building's beautifully restored front for the plain brick box behind is the most ambitious. The first impression it gives is of a multitude of windows, variously shaped and projected, above the handsome regularity of a classic Queen Anne cast iron storefront. Small-paned transoms increase the light into the high interiors and incidentally scale down the shop windows to accord with the horizontality of the street. As with many Queen Anne buildings, the basic compositional scheme is symmetrical, centered in the recessed entrance to the upper floors. An ornamented terra-cotta arch at the second-story level accents the entrance. Above it a three-

story bay window, flanked by arched openings, all within a slightly projecting ornamental framework, makes a centerpiece for the elevation. But as is also typical of the Queen Anne Style, no sooner is a central axis established than asymmetrical "features" counter the balance. Another three-story bay projects south of the centerline. More sensationally, north of it a domed tower swells off one corner. Meaning to be "Saracenic," in accord with Victorian love of the exotic, it also suggests a stack of Victorian domestic conservatories looking toward the center of the city. Arched windows across the topmost floor also recall minarets.

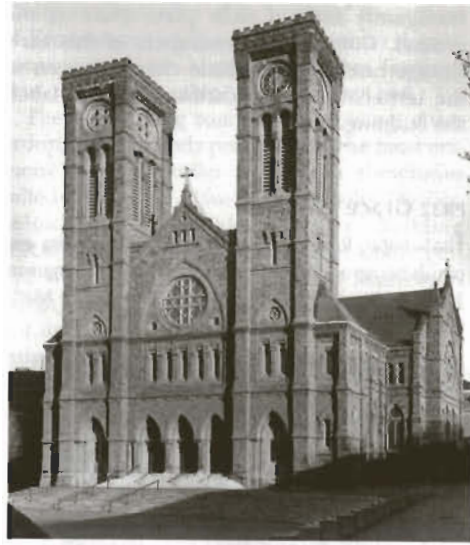
These exotic touches probably represented the client's taste, since they are nearly unique in the architect's work. Jerothmul B. Barnaby was a self-made millionaire from his clothing store a few blocks away on Westminster Street. He presented this investment property as a self-renewing wedding present to his daughter and son-in-law. (Is the mysterious bust on the terracotta roundel toward the southern end of the building a portrait of him, of his son-in-law, or of some historical figure?) Barnaby's penchant for the Middle East seems confirmed by a similar tower which the same architects added two years later to his Broadway mansion (PR186). The Conrad Building was beautifully restored as luxury apartments, but the area was not ripe for gentrification, so the building became a dormitory for Johnson and Wales University students.

By comparison, Caesar Misch's commercial palace is tame indeed. Another example of Neo-Renaissance trim in terra-cotta which is boldly challenged by the logic of the steel-frame, plate-glass commercial building, the Misch Building's brick walls give it a more normative look than Harkness's reduction of "walls" to the bare bones skeleton of his Summerfield Building (PR15).

PR35 Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul

1878–1889, Patrick C. Keely, with numerous interior renovations. Cathedral Sq.

Born in Ireland but arriving in the United States from England, Keely established a flourishing practice centered in work for the Roman Catholic Church. Among his more than 500 churches, one of his earliest is Providence's St. Joseph's (1853), at Hope and Arnold streets, with a well-preserved exterior but somewhat altered interiors. He provided designs for cathedrals for Buffalo, Chicago, Boston, Hartford,



PR35 Cathedral of Saints Peter and Paul

and Portland, Maine, as well as this for the Diocese of Providence. For the massive monumentality desired, Keely may have been peripherally influenced by the Romanesque of H. H. Richardson's newly completed Trinity Church in Boston, although he more likely depended directly on German medieval examples, crossed with detailing and overall forms from French cathedrals, as well as from his own earlier work in the Gothic Revival. The most remarkable aspect of the cathedral is less its forbidding exterior than the truly impressive size of its interior. It is interesting for the overall multicolored, small-scale pattern of gray marble moldings and stained glass. In contrast to the variety of styles and periods in the stained glass at Grace Church (PR32), here it is homogeneous. The tiers of windows, installed in 1886, were all made in the workshops of Tiroler Glasmalerei in a style which suggests that of the early nineteenth-century Nazarene painters in Germany. (This group archaized and abstracted in the early Renaissance manner of Raphael and his disciples with the aim of returning religious art to expression then deemed to have been exceptionally pure before its "corruption" by baroque flamboyance and histrionics.) Most extraordinary is the timber-and-board "vaulting" with elaborate polychrome paneling which hangs from roof supports, a tour de force of nineteenth-century carpentry. It is surface, multitudinously decorated, not structure, which dominates both walls and roof in this

vast interior. The marble flooring and the altar area are obviously later additions; so is the present array of organ pipes in one of the transepts, giving to the original organ loft over the entrance the sense of void left by a large, uprooted tree.

The underused and rather forlorn plaza in front of the cathedral and the area of apartments around it result from a redevelopment effort (1967–1976; urban plan by I. M. Pei and Partners) to bring residents downtown. It was tied into the shopping mall created by the closing

of Westminster Street to vehicular traffic, an attempt at reinvigoration which failed. Cathedral Square itself and its fine pyramidal fountain are the work of Pei with Zion and Breen. Consider here the outcome of a plan to "revitalize" a battered downtown: a failed shopping corridor; a downgraded apartment renovation; a vacant plaza; a mostly locked and empty cathedral. Where no community exists to inhabit them, even well-considered schemes for urban renewal offer no more than a slim hope for a turnaround.

The Jewelry District and the Harborfront

Beyond the interstate underpass, Chestnut Street becomes a street of industrial buildings which provides an introduction to the Jewelry District. If Samuel Slater represents the technological progenitor for Rhode Island's textile industry (see under Pawtucket), so Nehemiah Dodge stands in the same position for the Providence-centered costume jewelry industry. In his Providence jewelry shop in the late 1790s, Dodge discovered a process for plating silver and gold to base metals, thereby providing the industry's foundation. A tight area, the Jewelry District is mostly concentrated within the interchange loop of Interstates 95 and 195, although somewhat contracted from its onetime extent. The small size and high value of the product encouraged small-to-medium-sized factory units. Located here until well into the 1960s and 1970s in straightforward, handsomely proportioned brick construction, they are worth study as a group. As portions of this industry have disappeared or moved to more open sites, many of the buildings left behind have been converted to office, apartment, and studio use, although manufacturing continues in some of them. Notwithstanding the spread of the industry around the area (and increasingly outside it), Providence is still the national center for costume jewelry, to which buyers make biannual treks to inspect displays at two wholesale markets.

PR36 Jewelry Factories in the Chestnut Street Area

1888–1911. Late 1970s, mid-1980s, several converted to offices and apartments. Chestnut St. from Pine to Point sts.; 91 Friendship St.

The Waite-Thresher Building (PR36.1; 1911, Dwight Seabury; 1984–1985, reuse conversion), at 30–32 Chestnut Street (corner of Pine Street) introduces a line of brick factory buildings in the heart of what used to be the larger Jewelry District. These are straightforward loft buildings. Their functional beauty depends on the fine quality of their brickwork in planar or pier-and-spandrel walls, in conjunction with the regular rhythm of their generously propor-

tioned sash windows, mostly in wood, all silled in granite and topped with shallow brick relieving arches. The window unit is usually (but not always) divided by a center mullion to form a pair, each half with two sash, the height often stretched by a fixed transom to increase interior light. Variations occur in dimensions and divisions into panes from four over four to ten over ten, with two to five for the transom.

In contrast to the spread of the three- and four-story brick textile mills (see especially examples in Pawtucket), these are compact blocks of five to seven stories. The projecting towers characteristic of the textile mills were unnecessary where rented loft space accommodated a patchwork of changing tenants and the