**Name:** Joseph and William Russell House  

**Location:**  
**Street and Number:** 118 North Main Street  
**City or Town:** Providence  
**State or Code:** Rhode Island  
**County or Code:** Providence 007

**Classification:**  
**Category:** District  
**Ownership:** Public  
**Status:** Occupied  
**Accessible to the Public:** Yes

**Present Use:**  
**Check One:** Commercial  
**Comments:**

**Owner of Property:**  
**Name:** B. B. Realty Company, c/o Ernest Blazar  
**Street and Number:** 490 Angell Street  
**City or Town:** Providence  
**State or Code:** Rhode Island 02906 44

**Location of Legal Description:**  
**Court House, Register of Deeds, etc.:** Recorder of Deeds, City Hall  
**Street and Number:** 25 Dorrance Street  
**City or Town:** Providence  
**State or Code:** Rhode Island 02903 44

**Representation in Existing Surveys:**  
**Title of Survey:** College Hill Demonstration Grant, Project R. I., D-1  
**Date of Survey:** 1959  
**Depository for Survey Records:** Providence Redevelopment Agency  
**Street and Number:** 10 Dorrance Street  
**City or Town:** Providence  
**State or Code:** Rhode Island 02903 44
The Russell house, built in 1772, is an almost square, five bay wide, timber-framed house faced in rubbed brick. The house faces east, and at present is set above a ground level of shops. The appearance of the original basement level is not known but it is possible that a double flight of steps led to the main entrance set above. A change in the level of the street may account for the unusual height of the basement level. It is of three stories — the third one of diminished height — and has a hipped roof capped by a small monitor. Such fenestrated monitors became a common characteristic of Providence houses by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and this is one of the very earliest. A round-ended, three story projection has changed the appearance of the south side in the past century.

There is little exterior adornment, but what there is is visually meaningful. Projecting, horizontal brick courses divide the large cube into three units. An elaborate, central entrance on the eastern front provides the decorative focus of the facade. Copied from Plate 36 of Batty Langley's Builders' Compleat Assistant (London, 1736), the wooden doorway is framed by a modillioned and dentilled segmental pediment resting on a Corinthian entablature en ressaut above engaged, fluted Corinthian columns. A rusticated area is in respond to the columns and entablature and forms a surround to the door. A fine, academic wooden cornice of modillions and dentils runs continuously around the house below the eaves. Splayed brick lintels above the windows on the facade are in contrast to the segmentally-arched windows on the other elevations.

The interior plan is conventional for large houses of the period: two rooms placed to either side of a long, central hall with two interior chimneys providing back-to-back fireplaces for each room. With storage areas and passageways adjoining the fireplaces, they appear flush to the wall. The main staircase rises in two runs at the back end of the hall, lighted by a pilastered, Palladian window on the landing.

The interior has been greatly altered. Most of the woodwork has been dispersed among museums in Minneapolis, Brooklyn, and Denver. The length of the first-floor hall was originally paneled from mop-board to chair-rail height with handsome raised and bevelled paneling, and decorated with an elaborate cornice of modillions and dentils. A semi-elliptical arch with keystone, supported on engaged Corinthian columns, divided the entrance hall from the main hall. The ramped rail and turned balustrades of the stairway curled around the newel on the first floor.

Interior trim throughout was academic and derived from English builders' handbooks of a decade or two earlier. The principal rooms were fully paneled, cornices were elaborate, and some internal openings were given paneled arches supported on pilasters. The fireplace mantels throughout were elaborate and varied. (Continued)
7. Description (continued)

The house suffered increasing neglect and decay. In 1875 it was converted into a hotel, and in 1920 the interior was stripped and the structure was used for storage and commercial activities. Today it is used for shops, lofts, and apartments, but it has retained the major part of its original exterior character.
Erected in 1772, the Russell house was one of the earliest, large-scale brick houses built in Providence. Such expensive and academically-inspired decoration was far more common in Newport than in Providence, and was not to be repeated in the city until well after the Revolutionary War. Built by the Russell brothers, who had prospered as retailers, the house was located near the downtown commercial and shipping areas rather than in the increasingly fashionable Benefit Street-College Hill area.

The fine entrance and elaborate, original interior detail fully reveal the then common practice of American builders to copy from the English design books, such as those of Batty Langley. Even in its altered and neglected state, the Russell house retains its fine proportions, its careful, textured brickwork, and its sparse, though striking, exterior adornment.
As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National [ ] State [x] Local [ ]

Name ________________________________

Title ________________________________

Date ________________________________

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

______________________________
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date ________________________________

ATTEST:

______________________________
Keeper of The National Register

Date ________________________________
**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**  
**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**  
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**  
*(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)*

1. **NAME**  
   - **COMMON:** Russell (Joseph and William) House  
   - **AND/OR HISTORIC:**

2. **LOCATION**  
   - **STREET AND NUMBER:** 118 North Main Street  
   - **CITY OR TOWN:** Providence  
   - **STATE:** Rhode Island  
   - **CODE:** 44  
   - **COUNTY:** Providence  
   - **CODE:** 007

3. **PHOTO REFERENCE**  
   - **PHOTO CREDIT:** Alice H. R. Hauck  
   - **DATE OF PHOTO:** March, 1971  
   - **NEGATIVE FILED AT:** Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission, State House, 90 Smith Street, Providence, R. I., 02903

4. **IDENTIFICATION**  
   - **DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.:** Exterior seen from the south-east.
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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   State House, 90 Smith Street, Providence, R. I.; 02903

4. IDENTIFICATION
   DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.
   Main entrance.
GEOGRAPHICAL COORDINATES
Latitude: 41° 49' 10"
Longitude: 71° 24' 36" West
1. **NAME**
   - **COMMON**: Russell (Joseph and William) House

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   - **STREET AND NUMBER**: 118 North Main Street
   - **CITY OR TOWN**: Providence
   - **STATE**: Rhode Island

3. **MAP REFERENCE**
   - **SOURCE**: U. S. Geological Survey
   - **SCALE**: 1: 24,000
   - **DATE**: 1957

4. **REQUIREMENTS**
   - **TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS**
     1. Property boundaries where required.
     2. North arrow.
     3. Latitude and longitude reference.