



STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS
 HISTORICAL PRESERVATION & HERITAGE COMMISSION

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**PAWTUCKET'S EXCHANGE STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT
 IS LISTED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

A well-preserved cluster of distinctive buildings and structures, the Exchange Street Historic District in Pawtucket has received federal recognition for its contributions to Pawtucket's history. Frederick C. Williamson, Chairman of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, announced that the National Park Service has added the Exchange Street Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places. The National Register is the Federal Government's official list of properties throughout the United States whose historical and architectural significance makes them worthy of preservation.

The compact 10.47-acre historic district is located on the northeast edge of downtown Pawtucket, across the Blackstone River from Pawtucket City Hall and Slater Mill. The district is centered on Exchange Street, between the Exchange Street Bridge that spans the river to the west and Broadway to the east.

As early as the mid-1600s, industries dotted the banks of the Blackstone in order to harness the river's tremendous water power. Due to its elevated position on a bluff above the river, however, the Exchange Street Historic District remained undeveloped until the advent of steam power after the Civil War. As new industries located in the district, a bridge was built in 1874 to serve the area. It was replaced by the present granite-faced, two-span Exchange Street Bridge in

1928.

One of the first developers in the area was Providence County Sheriff Elias Nickerson who acquired four lots at the corner of Broadway in 1873 and erected the Nickerson-Charland Building (1874) with two tenement apartments and a ground-floor commercial space at 189-191 Exchange Street. This is a three-story, wood-frame, Second Empire building with an early storefront, a mansard roof, and original Italianate details. In 1908, Zoel Charland purchased the building and located his tinsmith's shop there. The property remains in the Charland family to this day.

Industrial development arrived in 1880 with the construction of both the George H. Fuller & Son Factory and the Rhode Island Card Board Company. Designed by the noted Providence architectural firm of Stone & Carpenter, the Fuller building (1880) is a long, wood-frame, gable-roofed industrial structure. The same firm, George H. Fuller & Son, has produced costume jewelry and findings at 145 Exchange Street continuously for 122 years. The Card Board Company complex at 163 Exchange Street (1880) consists of two brick industrial buildings linked at the street elevation. At this location, cardboard manufacturing machines produced shirt collars, photographic materials, wedding stationery, tubes, and other materials until 1976.

Buildings like the Pawtucket Armory at 172 Exchange Street and the Lebanon Mills at 10 Front Street proclaimed Pawtucket's civic maturity at the turn of the century. Designed by William R. Walker & Son, the granite and brick, Romanesque Revival-style armory (1895) consists of a crenellated headhouse for administrative offices and a gable-roofed drill hall for conducting military exercises. Over the years, the armory has served as a headquarters for military regiments and a place for public functions. In 2002, a local development group purchased the building for adaptive reuse as a performing arts center. The Lebanon Mills (1901) include a 12-bay, brick and timber-frame core building, substantially expanded by 1939. Owned by a series of firms, the mills produced high-grade fabrics, underwear, children's knit goods, and novelty jewelry.

Two more buildings complete the district. The two-story, brick-walled John W. Little & Company printworks was erected at 190 Exchange Street in 1914 and expanded in 1919. Decorating the front corners of the building, tag-shaped medallions made of cast stone represent one of the company's products: printed tags and labels for local mills. In addition to industrial materials, Little's printing firm also turned out government publications and books until the late 1980s. At 160 Exchange Street, the East High School—later renamed for education pioneer William E. Tolman—has the most commanding presence in the district. Pawtucket architects Monahan and Meikle designed this Colonial-Revival style school in 1925 to accommodate 1200 students, many of whom were the children of mill workers, managers, and owners.

According to Edward F. Sanderson, Executive Director of the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission, "These historic buildings reflect Pawtucket's stature as a prosperous industrial city at the turn of the last century. Today their designation as National Register historic properties allows the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission to approve tax credits that will help their owners rehabilitate these structures and return them to productive use."

In addition to honoring properties for their contributions to local, state, or national history, listing on the National Register provides consideration during the planning for Federal or State projects and makes properties eligible for Federal and State tax benefits. Owners of private property listed on the National Register are free to maintain, manage, or dispose of their property as they choose. As the state office for historic preservation, the Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission is the agency responsible for reviewing and submitting Rhode Island nominations to the National Register and for administering historic preservation tax credits.

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