

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

## 1. Name of Property

historic name: Westminster Street Historic District

other name/site number: same

## 2. Location

street & number: multiple

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Providence vicinity: N/A

state: RI county: Providence code: 007 zip code: 02903

## 3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: district

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>6</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 1

Name of related multiple property listing: NA

Property name Westminster Street Historic District, Prov. County, Prov., RI

**4. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination      request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register Criteria.

     See continuation sheet.

Frederick C. Williamson  
Signature of certifying official

9 April 03  
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property      meets      does not meet the National Register criteria.

     See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

**5. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

     entered in the National Register  
     See continuation sheet.

     determined eligible for the  
National Register  
     See continuation sheet.

     determined not eligible for the  
National Register

     removed from the National Register

     other (explain):     

Signature of Keeper

Date  
of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic: COMMERCE/TRADE

Sub: business

Current: COMMERCE/TRADE  
DOMESTIC

Sub: business  
multiple dwelling

Property name Westminster Street Historic District, Prov. County, Prov., RI

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria. \_\_\_ See continuation sheet.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- \_\_\_\_\_ entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ determined eligible for the  
National Register  
\_\_\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- \_\_\_\_\_ determined not eligible for the  
National Register
- \_\_\_\_\_ removed from the National Register
- \_\_\_\_\_ other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date  
of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic: COMMERCE/TRADE

Sub: business

Current: COMMERCE/TRADE  
DOMESTIC

Sub: business  
multiple dwelling

Property name Westminster Street Historic District, Prov. County, Prov., RI**7. Description**

Architectural Classification:

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco  
LATE VICTORIAN/Gothic, Italianate

Other Description:

Materials: foundation CONCRETE, STONE roof ASPHALT/METAL/SYNTHETICS  
walls BRICK other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

X. See continuation sheet.**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

Applicable National Register Criteria: A, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions):

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURECOMMERCEPeriod(s) of Significance: 1870-1933, 1905-1952Significant Dates: ca. 1870 (Bongartz Building built); ca. 1933 (Chiappinelli Building built)Significant Person(s): NACultural Affiliation: NAArchitect/Builder: NA

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

X. See continuation sheet.

Property name Westminster Street Historic District, Prov. County, Prov., RI**9. Major Bibliographical References** See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

 preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. previously listed in the National Register: (Burrows Block) previously determined eligible by the National Register designated a National Historic Landmark recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

 State historic preservation office Other state agency Federal agency Local government University Other -- Specify Repository: Rhode Island Historical Society Library**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property: 0.98 acres

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A \_\_\_\_\_ B

C \_\_\_\_\_ D

 See continuation sheet.Verbal Boundary Description:  See continuation sheet.Boundary Justification:  See continuation sheet.**11. Form Prepared By**Name/Title: Jeffrey D. Emidy, Architectural Historian, Mary E. Varden, Architectural AssistantOrganization: The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. Date: June 2002Street & Number: 210 Lonsdale Avenue Telephone: 401-728-8780City or Town: Pawtucket State: RI ZIP: 02860

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### Description

The Westminster Street Historic District is a small commercial area on the west side of Providence. Only 1 acre in size, the district contains six contiguous buildings, all contributing.

The district is located on the outskirts of Providence's central business district, just north of U.S. Route 1 and just west of Interstate 95. It runs laterally along a major thoroughfare in the middle of an area of mixed residential, civic, and commercial properties. The topography of the district is flat, with a gentle descending slope to the north, toward the rear of the district buildings. The district includes buildings along Westminster Street, flanking the intersection with Dean Street, and Normal Court, perpendicular to Westminster Street, and abuts Lyman Street at the rear. Westminster Street is a primary east-west artery, one of several that radiate from the center of Providence, many of which are connected by Dean Street, running north-south. Lyman Street runs east from Dean Street, connecting to Stewart Street, but has no buildings located along it. Normal Court historically connected Westminster Street to Washington Street, to the north, but is no longer a passable right-of-way. It has no addresses associated with it and is located between two buildings.

Providence is the capital of Rhode Island, and at 18 square miles is the largest city in the state. It is located at the head of Narragansett Bay, and is well drained by a system of rivers flowing into the bay. The Moshassuck River flows from the north, in the eastern half of the city, and is fed by the West River, which flows south through the center of the northern half of the city. The Woonasquatucket River flows into the Moshassuck River from the western part of the city, merging just north of the headwaters of the Providence River, in downtown Providence. The Seekonk River, which makes up part of the eastern border of the city, also flows into the Providence River, before it, in turn, flows into Narragansett Bay. Because of its position at the head of Narragansett Bay, the topography of Providence is relatively flat, its greatest elevation change being found as the land rises to the east near the confluence of the Moshassuck and the Providence rivers. The city is further fragmented by the presence of four major highways. Interstate 95 divides the city from north to south, with State Route 146 creating a further division north of the center of the city, while Interstate 195 and US Route 6 divide the city from east to west. Other US routes and state highways enter the city from every direction, creating a complex system of radiating surface

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thoroughfares.

Westminster Street runs east to west across Providence, from the Providence River, west through Downtown Providence to Empire Street, to the former Westminster Mall. It continues on the west side of Interstate 95, and passes through the West Side neighborhood to Olneyville. This section of Westminster Street is today defined by Canonicus Square (the intersection of Westminster and Cranston Streets) at the west end, and Interstate 95 on the east end. Prior to the construction of the interstate, the east end of the area was at Cathedral Square, now on the east side of the highway.

The buildings that make up the Westminster Street Historic District are a prominent streetscape element of the area. Built out to the sidewalk along Westminster Street, the Burrows Block, at 735-745 Westminster Street (1880), and the Lilly Building at 747-753 Westminster Street (1899), in particular, form an imposing wall to the west of Dean Street. The Hampshire, at 711-717 Westminster Street (ca. 1897), and The Paris Restaurant building, at 721-725 Westminster Street (ca. 1890), have smaller scales and with their projecting bays present a more open feeling on the upper stories. The Chiappinelli Building, at 705 Westminster Street (ca. 1933), and the Bongartz Building (ca. 1870), at the east and west ends of the district, respectively, step down toward the street level and appear to soften the edges of the mass of buildings.

The setting of the district is characterized by large, institutional buildings on the opposite side of Westminster Street, and smaller, commercial buildings on the streets flanking the district. The south side of Westminster Street is dominated by the James L. Hanley Educational Center (1923, 1966-70), a campus containing the modern, two-and-three-story buildings of both Classical and Central High School, to the west of Stewart Street, while Westminster Place, a modern, 11-story, high-rise apartment building fills the lot to the south of Stewart Street. The Doctor Robert E. Roberti Administration Building, a large, modern, brick block, frames the district to the west, beyond which are found primarily modern, wood and brick commercial buildings, and the brick Citizens Bank building (1921) at Canonicus Square (formerly Hoyle Square). At the east end of the district are three low, modern, commercial buildings and Route 95. To the rear of the district are the former Mohican Hotel (1927), a four-story, brick building on Dean Street, the Providence Public Safety Complex building (2002), and several concrete block, commercial buildings and parking lots

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on the north side of Washington Street.

Westminster Street

705 The Chiappinelli Building (ca. 1933): Located at the northwest corner of the district, southeast of Stewart Street and northeast of the Hampshire, this Art Deco style office building is one story tall and rectangular in plan. The building is constructed on a concrete foundation, and has brick walls with a cast concrete storefront. The flat roof of the building has a brick, interior chimney at the east side, rear. The primary entrance to the building is centered on the symmetrical, five-bay, south-facing facade, and consists of a modern, metal frame, double-leaf, glass door, recessed in a terrazo-floored vestibule. Plate glass windows in four bays, two on each side of the door, stretch the width of the building, with corrugated, black metal panels as the base. The building is five bays deep, with the four east side window bays filled with concrete blocks and brick. The rear bay on the east side is an entrance, consisting of a steel door in a rectangular frame. The west elevation of the building is flush with the east elevation of The Hampshire building. At the rear of the Chiappinelli Building stands a small, attached, one story, brick, flat roof addition that serves as a loading dock. The cast concrete cornice at the front of the building reads S. Chiappinelli Building in the center, and the building also has a modern metal sign, perpendicular to the facade, for the current tenant, Pomerantz Staffing Alternatives. Above the window bays are a full-width, retractable, cloth awning with an ornamental band above. The band is made up of alternating panels of vertically banded black Carrara glass and cast metal panels with sunburst motifs. The building has maintained its exterior integrity, of both the storefront arrangement and overall structure, though the degree of integrity on the interior is unknown.

711-717 The Hampshire (ca 1897): Located at the northeast part of the district, southeast of the Chiappinelli Building and northeast of the Paris Restaurant building, The Hampshire building is three-and-one-half stories tall with a multipart, rectangular plan, and



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abuts the buildings to either side. The east and west walls of the main block are brick, with stucco covering the north and south walls, and wood clapboards on the rear sections of the building. Above the first story, each of the end bays of the five-bay facade is recessed one bay in depth, creating the appearance of three bays. Two, semihexagonal, projecting bays flank the windowless center bay, both with a single window on each face of the two stories. The building is constructed atop a concrete foundation, and has a hipped roof with two gable roof dormers on the front slope, and one on its rear, all having six-pane, casement sash with fixed, semicircular sash above. The roof overhangs the walls slightly, and a cornice with a flat entablature and simple molding wraps around the building. Brick chimney stacks rise from the exposed-brick end walls of the block, approximately near the center of its depth.

The building is currently being renovated, and while the first story storefront division plan has remained intact, extensive exterior material alterations have occurred. Modern windows have replaced the original upper-story sash, though in the same locations. The exterior walls of the building have been covered with stucco on the upper stories, and have inset tile ornaments. On the first story, the 711 and 713 Westminster Street sections have had new storefronts installed, with new windows and doors, and wood window moldings. The storefront at 711 has a fixed plate glass pane at the right of the recessed replacement door. The entrance to number 713 is flanked by glass windows, and has a new door set flush with the facade. The entrance at number 715 is simply a modern, flat, steel door with a replacement fixed sash above. This door leads to an ascending stairwell behind. The storefront at number 717 has maintained its historic materials. It has a buff brick facade, plate glass windows with green marble base panels, and a wood panel door with a glass pane in the top half. The interior of the building appears to have been altered significantly. The upper stories appear to have been gutted, and some interior alterations have been made at the storefront level. Some of the stamped metal wall and ceiling covering has been retained in numbers 711, 713, and 717.

Two of the three rear sections of the building are being

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renovated along with the main block. These wood-frame structures are three stories tall, with low hip roofs sheathed with asphalt shingles. New clapboards have been applied to the outside of these rear blocks, new windows have been installed, and new roof surfaces applied. The middle section of the building has a large wooden deck on its roof, with an adjoining stair tower permitting access from inside the building. The rear block has two brick, interior chimneys piercing its roof. Windows on these two rear sections of the building are mostly casement style, with some fixed with awning panes on the lower portion, all in simple, rectangular surrounds. An additional, one-story, flat roof, concrete block ell is attached to the rear of the building.

719-725 The Paris Restaurant Building (ca 1890): Located in the middle of the district, at the northeast corner of Westminster and Dean streets, this is a three-story, vernacular, commercial building, with a rectangular plan. The brick building is constructed atop a granite foundation, and has a rubber membrane surfaced, flat roof surrounded by a parapet with a peaked center section. The three-bay facade has projecting, two-story bays flanking the center bay above the storefront. These bays are semi-hexagonal in shape, with two sash on the front and one on each of the sides. The bays are sheathed in flat sheet metal. The center bay of each of the top two stories contains an arched, boarded door opening. A cast-iron fire escape stretches across the facade between the projecting bays. The first floor elevation of the facade has been heavily altered, with modern windows and doors, and modern, artificial-stone facing and remnants of some Carrara glass panels. A molded, cast concrete band between the first and second floors of the facade extends down to the foundation level at either end of the storefronts. There are two storefront bays on the first floor facade, with a row of concrete-block-filled bays across the west elevation. These large bays appear to have been plate glass window bays, as they have the remnants of some transom light panes above, of which most have been broken or boarded over. There are three entrances to the building, two on the storefront, and one at the rear bay of the five-bay west elevation. The storefront entrances consist of modern, flat, wooden doors in rectangular surrounds. The west side entrance consists of two, flat, steel doors in rectangular openings, under

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a decorative brick arch with cast concrete keystone and voussoirs at the springing points. These doors open to a rear staircase. Fenestration of the storefront consists of three modern, polygonal fixed sash of varying widths. Other fenestration on the building includes one-over-one, double-hung, modern, replacement sash in all of the openings except the two in the stair bay at the rear of the west elevation. These windows are one-over-one wood sash in rectangular surrounds, with a decorative brick arch over the second story window, and a filled, rectangular transom opening over the third floor window. Other windows on the side elevation are arranged in pairs. All of the window openings on the building have rectangular surrounds and brick lintels and frames. The rear of the building is a blank brick wall, and the east elevation abuts the neighboring building. Ornament on the building includes a cast concrete cornice band, a cast concrete blank medallion in the center of the parapet, and a cast concrete hood over the third story center bay door.

735-745 The Burrows Block (1880): Located at the center of the district, on the northwest corner of Dean and Westminster streets, northeast of the Lilly Building, this three-story, brick, Victorian-Gothic style, commercial building is rectangular in plan, with a three-story, concrete block, stair tower addition on the northern elevation. The building is constructed atop a granite and concrete foundation, and capped with a deck hip roof. Two interior, brick chimneys are located at the front slope of the slate shingle roof, with three on the rear slope, just inside the rear wall. The symmetrical building is nine bays wide, with two-story, brick pilasters between, on the second and third floors of the south-facing facade, and has storefronts and a center entrance on the first story. Each bay of the second and third stories of the facade has paired, two-over-two, wood sash with a three-by-seven-pane fixed transom sash above. Each window opening has a stone lintel with a scalloped bottom edge, and a rectangular, stone sill. The center bay has a paired, one-over-one window with a four-light, semihexagonal transom, and a continuous, stone lintel and sill across the opening. Decorative, dogtooth brick panels are located below the second story windows, with checkerwork panels below the third story windows. The first story of the facade has a center entrance

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consisting of a double-leaf, wood paneled door in a brick, segmental arch opening with mixed stone voussoirs and bricks forming the arch. An arched, three-light transom caps the bay, while cast-iron, floral medallions flank the top of the opening, and a granite block makes up the landing. To the west of the entrance are two storefronts (numbers 743 and 745) with cast-iron columns and plate glass windows. The recessed entrance bays contain double-leaf, wood-and-glass doors, and have stickwork brackets at the top of the entrance opening. Brick pilasters between the storefronts are elevated on carved stone bases. The first story is separated from the second by a decorative, coved cornice of repeating, cast-iron, floral medallions west of the center entrance, and a flat cornice east of the entrance (1920s construction). East of the entrance is a double-width storefront (number 735), with metal framing around the plate glass windows, and modern brick panels below. The entrance to this storefront is recessed, in the easternmost bay, and consists of a modern, metal frame, glass door. The east elevation of the building is seven bays deep, with segmentally arched, two-over-two sash on the first floor and rectangular openings above. The lintels, sills, and brick pilasters of the east side of the building are scalloped and flat stone, matching those on the building facade. Additionally, in the rear bay of the east elevation (at 331 Dean Street) is a small, vacant storefront the width of two bays above. The storefront has a wooden door flanked by a single, large, wood-filled window opening with a three-light transom above. The rear elevation of the building contains an asymmetrical mix of one-over-one and two-over-two sash, all with fixed, three-light transom sash. Ornament on the building is confined to the upper stories of the facade, and includes a brownstone panel between the second and third stories with the words Burrows Block embossed. The lintel of the third story, center bay window is inscribed with the date 1880. Over the center bay is a herringbone patterned brick panel, and a corbeled brick band just below the cornice with a repeating, recessed, cross pattern. The cornice is a coved metal band with integrated, stamped metal brackets. The Burrows Block was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1990 (VanNoppen 1990).

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Westminster Street (continued)

747-755 The Lilly Building (1899): Located at the southwest end of the district, southwest of the Burrows Block and northeast of the Bongartz Building, this four-story building is rectangular in plan, nine bays wide and sixteen bays deep, and has brick walls constructed atop a brick foundation. The low hip roof of the building is sheathed with asphalt shingles and has a one-story, square tower rising from the center of and flush with the south-facing facade. The tower is topped by a pyramidal hip roof clad in metal shingles, and has a flagpole rising from the peak. Metal letters applied to the south-facing facade of the tower read "Lilly Building 1899." An interior, brick chimney is located at the northwest corner of the building. Fenestration of the building consists of one-over-one, vinyl replacement windows in nine bays, with cast concrete lintels and sills. The central bay is set off from the others by flanking corbeled brick pilasters. A 1907 photograph of the building shows that there were cast iron fire escapes across all but the center bays of the front of the building, and a cast iron railing at the edge of the roof. It also appears to show recessed storefronts and a recessed center entrance bay. An Art Deco style storefront was added to the building in the late 1930s, and included corrugated metal panels beneath the windows, and black Vitrolite panels above. This storefront covered the second story facade, including the windows, and was topped with a decorative copper band with stamped geometric elements. The new storefront was designed by David Shapiro, of Providence, and constructed by William Bloom & Son, general contractors, also of Providence. The building is currently under renovation and is being transformed into residential space in the upper stories, with storefronts below.

765-769 The Bongartz Building (ca 1870): Located at the southwest corner of the district, southwest of the Lilly Building, this three-story, rectangular plan, Italianate style, commercial building has a one-story, rectangular-plan, brick, rear addition. The main block has a concrete foundation, with brick walls, and is capped with an asphalt roll, hipped roof. A modern, brick, six-bay storefront is located on the first floor of the building. The primary entrance to the building is located two bays in from

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the west wall of the building, and consists of a double-leaf, modern, metal-frame, glass door in a recessed vestibule. Fenestration of the building varies with location. The second story of the facade has one-over-one, rectangular, replacement sash with granite sills and segmental-arched, brick lintels with cast-iron drip moldings. On the seven-bay deep side elevations, windows are mixed one-over-one replacement sash and six-over-six wood sash in segmental-arched openings. The rear bay on both the second and third floors is a full-height loading door, with a steel hoist I-beam protruding from the wall above the third story bay. The rear elevation of the main block has one-over-one replacement sash asymmetrically spread over the elevation. The rear addition of the building is five bays deep, with 12-pane, fixed sash. Ornament on the building consists of a granite stringcourse between the first and second stories, a wooden cornice with metal brackets, and a carved brownstone panel centered on the facade between the second and third stories that has the words "Bongartz Building" in relief. The building currently has a modern, metal sign under the second story windows on the facade that reads "Jacob Licht Inc. Restaurant Equipment and Supplies."

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Photographs

Photographer: Jeffrey D. Emidy

Date: June/July 2002

Negatives on File at: PAL, 210 Lonsdale Avenue, Pawtucket, RI 02860

Photo #1: Chiappinelli Building, looking northwest, showing The Hampshire at left.

Photo #2: The Hampshire, looking northwest, showing the Paris Restaurant building at left and the Chiappinelli Building at right.

Photo #3: The Paris Building, looking northeast, showing the Hampshire at right.

Photo #4: Burrows Block, looking northwest.

Photo #5: Lilly Building, looking northeast, showing Burrows Block on right.

Photo #5: Bongartz Building, looking northwest, showing Lilly Building on right.

Photo #7: Westminster Street Historic District, looking northwest. Right to left: Chiappinelli Building, The Hampshire, The Paris Restaurant building, Burrows Block, Lilly Building, Bongartz Building.

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### Significance

The Westminster Street Historic District is a 1-acre district containing six buildings that reflect the commercial growth of this section of Providence in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The district is a significant remnant of a once expansive commercial center that stretched the length of Westmister Street from downtown Providence to Hoyle Square. It is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under criteria A and C at the local level in the areas of commerce and architecture. The significance of the district arises from its development as a local commercial center on a major thoroughfare at the edge of a burgeoning city with national and international mercantile interests. It is also locally significant for its twentieth-century development as a focused center of furniture retailing.

While all of the buildings may not be individually eligible for listing in the National Register, as a group they constitute a distinguishable assemblage of associated resources. The Burrows Block, which is included in the district, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1990. Five of the six buildings in the district were constructed between 1870 and 1900, and are similar in style and materials. The Chiappinelli Building, though constructed later, is associated with the others as a result of the later development of the area as a center for the furniture retail industry.

The periods of significance of the district are from 1870 to 1933 and 1905 to 1952. The first period covers the construction of the buildings, beginning with the approximate date of construction of the Bongartz Building and ending with that of the Chiappinelli Building. The secondary period of significance encompasses the district's role in furniture retailing, from the first known existence of a furniture concern to the end of the customary 50-year requirement.

The original plats of Providence, as set out between 1637 and 1650, stretched east from the east bank of the Providence River. Until 1750, most settlement was limited to the area of these plots and lands further east, to the Seekonk River. In that year, however, the Mathewson Farm, bounded by Washington, Weybosset, and Clemence streets, and Cathedral Square on the west, was opened for development. By 1753, a road had been built through the area, from Turks Head to Dorrance Street (then Muddy Dock Creek). In 1763, a lottery was raised to generate 600 pounds with which to lay out a straight road from the Great Bridge (at Weybosset Street,



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constructed 1660) to the west, out of the town. After being known for some time as "the new Street" and "the new street on the west side of the Great Bridge," the street was named Westminster. This name was chosen for political reasons, rather than to commemorate the street of the same name in London. The people who lived on Westminster Street hoped to establish a new town on the lands west of the river, to be free of the rule of the establishment in Providence. This town, never to be realized, would have been known as Westminster, after the town in England that, under the leadership of George Fox, founder of the Society of Friends, had become known as a center for liberal political thought. By 1770, as a result of the successful lottery, Westminster Street had reached the modern day area of Cathedral Square. Two years later, it extended to Olneyville, but under multiple names: from the Market House to Turks Head it was known as Market Street, from thence to Cathedral Square it was Westminster Street, and from Cathedral Square to Olneyville, it was called High Street. By 1827, it was constructed as far west as Aborn Street (Simister 1968:127-128; Woodward and Sanderson 1986:41-43, 238).

In its early days, Westminster Street was a residential road. The commercial hub of Providence was located on the east side of the Providence River, around the Market House. Throughout the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, residences were built and rebuilt along Westminster Street, with the most dense collection of housing in the area of the present-day downtown. At the western end of the street, the building stock was slightly different, as small commercial concerns intermingled with the residences. In 1739, Obediah Brown had established a tavern at Hoyle Square, which flourished throughout the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. A settlement of eight houses had sprung up around the tavern by 1783, which at that time was the most densely developed part of the area. By the mid-1820s, several houses were located along the western portion of Westminster Street, and by 1853, settlement along the street was fairly regular to a point slightly beyond Hoyle Square, toward Olneyville. Among the primarily residential buildings in the area, a limited number of small commercial concerns operated to serve travelers staying at the Hoyle Hotel or passing by on the stage road.

With the end of the Revolutionary War, Providence had resumed its oceanic commerce, achieving marked success in its trade with China, Europe, and South America. The peak of Rhode Island's maritime trade occurred in the 1780s and 1790s, encouraging further development of the downtown area. Ease of transport to and from ships docked in the wharves made the area along the east side of the Providence River the center of commercial growth

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throughout this period. Financial institutions, insurance companies, and commercial outlets all opened shops along South Main Street, at Market Square, and along South Water Street. With the role of seafaring vessels diminishing at the end of the eighteenth century, proximity to the wharves became less important for commercial concerns. A fire in 1801 that destroyed 37 buildings on South Main Street was the catalyst for the expansion of the downtown, as some of the businesses relocated to the west side of the Providence River, creating the beginnings of the commercial area around Weybosset Street. Though they were physically separated from the ships that transported material and news to and from other parts of the country and foreign lands, many of the businesses in the downtown area maintained national and international interests and involvement (Woodward and Sanderson 1986:37-39, 45-49).

At the other end of Westminster Street, large tracts of land to the north and west of Hoyle Square were held as farms and country retreats of successful businessmen from the town. However, in the mid-nineteenth century these parcels began to be platted as smaller developments. The impetus of development along Westminster Street west of Cathedral Square was the construction of streetcar lines in the city. In 1865, the first line in the city was constructed, running along Westminster Street, between the downtown area and Olneyville. The area of farms and retreat estates surrounding Olneyville, known as the West End, also benefitted from the presence of streetcar lines, with lines on Cranston Street and Elmwood Avenue following the Westminster Street line in the same year.

These streetcar lines and the westward spread of Providence's commercial downtown throughout the residential areas of the former Mathewson Farm were responsible for much of the development of the agricultural lands northwest of Cathedral Square. The boom in residential construction on these new developments was accompanied by an increase in the construction of small commercial and public buildings. Public buildings in the area included churches and schools built throughout the West End. As Hoyle Square was built up throughout the nineteenth century, the number of retail operations both at the square and along the roads just outside of the square, began to increase. These included dry goods stores, bakeries, and barber shops to cater to travelers and those not willing to travel to the east side of the river. Many were in small, wood-frame buildings, some converted from houses, while others had small buildings constructed for them (Woodward and Sanderson 1986:37-39).

By the end of the Civil War, the eastern end of Westminster Street had

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become the town's shopping center. Large stores, often four or five stories tall, were constructed to house department stores and specialty stores. In the city's outlying neighborhoods, as at the west end of Westminster Street, small shops providing such items as groceries and hardware, and restaurants continued to thrive. This was seen by some entrepreneurs as an opportunity for increased income, resulting in the construction of larger buildings, particularly along Westminster Street, in place of single residences. Of these buildings, five remain from the period 1870 to 1900. The Bongartz Building, at 765-769 Westminster Street, is a three-story building constructed circa 1870 to house shops on its first floor, and offices and a hall above. The Burrows Block, at 735-745 Westminster Street, constructed in 1880, has three storefronts on the first floor facade, with a second story of offices and a large hall on the third floor. It is said to be Providence's only known remaining example of a commercial block with shops on the first story, offices above, and a large meeting room on the top floor (VanNoppen 1990). The Burrows Block was listed in the National Register of Historic Places individually in 1990. The Lilly Building, at 747-753 Westminster Street, was constructed in 1899, between the Bongartz and Burrows buildings. It had multiple storefronts on its facade when built, but was later altered to have one, full-width storefront. The space above was used for offices. The Paris Restaurant building, at 721-725 Westminster Street, was constructed circa 1890, with storefronts on the first story, and residences in the two stories above. The Hampshire, at 711-717 Westminster Street, is a three-story building constructed circa 1897, with three storefronts on the first floor and apartments above. Other buildings of this type were built on Westminster Street in the late nineteenth century. However, the waves of development and neglect that have come over this area in the last century doomed them to demolition.

This area of Westminster Street is known locally for having been dominated by furniture retail concerns throughout the twentieth century. Throughout the early twentieth century, as residential construction and population growth within Providence and the surrounding cities soared, the buildings in the Westminster Street Historic District gradually became filled with furniture retailers. Stores selling both new and used furniture developed to serve city residents across a range of income levels. Mass production of furniture and new styles and materials allowed multiple concerns to exist in the same area. As early as 1905, the Lilly Building contained a furniture store, with others to follow in the Chiappinelli Building and the Hampshire by the mid-1930s, the Burrows Block by 1944, and the Bongartz Building by the 1950s. Within the district, only

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the Paris Restaurant building, housing at least one restaurant throughout its existence, seems never to have contained a furniture store.

With the urban renewal movement of the 1970s, the construction of Interstate 95 through Providence in the 1960s, and the construction of the campus of Classical and Central High Schools, much of the historic fabric of this section of Westminster Street has disappeared from the landscape. One other historic building that has managed to survive is the Chiappinelli Building, at 705 Westminster Street. This one-story building has a continuous, full-width storefront in the Art Deco style. It is associated with the other buildings in the district through its early twentieth-century commercial use and high degree of architectural integrity.

Following is a summary of the history and significance of each contributing resource within the Westminster Street Historic District.

### Chiappinelli Building, 705 Westminster Street

The Chiappinelli Building was constructed about 1933 by S. Chiappinelli. The building replaced the West Side Hotel, which stood at 703-707 Westminster Street from at least 1899 to 1920, when stores operated in the first story (UPA 1970a, 1970b). From 1893 until his death in 1920, the building was owned by Michael Lenahan. It was then acquired by Joseph Lenahan, and subsequently by the American Land Company in 1924, Carmine D'Errico, the Enterprise Real Estate Corporation, Gaston Lazarre, the Rhode Island Land Corporation, and the Western Land Corporation in 1932, before being purchased by S. Chiappinelli, Incorporated in June 1933. The building housed Weitman's Inc., a furniture store, in 1939, and later Ben Bliss Furniture Company, and by 1960, the Myron Herman Company. In 1978, the Myron Herman Company acquired the property, which it sold in 1993 to Michael Cooney Jr. (City of Providence 2002; Polk 1939, 1960). The property currently serves as the offices for Pomerantz Staffing Alternatives, an employment agency.

### The Hampshire, 711-717 Westminster Street

The Hampshire building was constructed circa 1897. In 1886, the previous building was owned by Helen Potter as a trustee. In 1899, the extant building was known as The Hampshire, and a bakery in the center storefront below was flanked by stores. A two-story dwelling stood on the lot behind The Hampshire. The footprint of the building in 1899 appears to be largely

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the same as the present footprint, except for the modern, one-story, rear addition (UPA 1970a). In 1918, and at least until 1926, the building was known as the Pilgrim Apartments (Hopkins 1918, 1926). The apartments later went by the name Doric Apartments (1950s) and Meg Apartments (1965-1975). By 1920, the center bakery had become a store. The Gem Furniture Company moved into the building's first story before 1935, and remained until at least 1985. By 1998, BRI-GE Furniture had taken over the space. Jacob Miller and Jacob Glantz acquired the property from Helen Potter in 1944, owning it for 19 years before it became the property of the Meg Corporation. The rear addition was constructed between 1920 and 1970. The building was subsequently owned by the SLM Corporation, Gem Investments, Incorporated, George N. and Richard N. White, and was purchased by its current owners, James V. Derentis and Daniel C. Cady, in 2001 (City of Providence 2002; Polk 1960, 1965, 1975, 1985, 1998; Sampson & Murdock 1920; UPA 1970b, 1970c).

**Paris Restaurant Building, 721-725 Westminster Street**

The Paris Restaurant Building, at 721-725 Westminster Street, was constructed circa 1890 as a two-storefront block. Charles H. Perkins acquired the previous building, an L-shaped block, in 1886. In 1910, George W. Frank and James H. McKenna purchased the building. By 1920, it contained a restaurant in the west storefront, and a store in the right. By 1925, the Paris Restaurant was located in the building. It remained a tenant until at least 1965. The building stayed in the McKenna family through James' widow Alice, and Julia McKenna, until 1966, when Freda Danakas acquired it. By 1970, the entire first floor was used as a restaurant. The building contained the FAP Lounge in 1975, the Brotherhood Lounge in 1985, and Club David in 1990. The building passed to the current owners, William and Josephine Aliferakis and Steven and Karen Drager, in 1993 (City of Providence 2002; Hopkins 1875; Polk 1975, 1985, 1990; Sampson & Murdock 1920, 1925, 1965; UPA 1970c). The two storefronts on the first floor appear to be vacant, at this time, while the upper floors are used as apartments.

**Burrows Block, 735-745 Westminster Street**

The Burrows Block, at 735-745 Westminster Street, was constructed in 1880 as an office and retail building. The firm of Joseph Burrows & Son was started by Joseph Burrows and his son, Caleb G. Burrows, in 1836. Joseph

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Burrows had been a carpenter in Providence 30 years prior, and had opened his own hardware store prior to going into business with his son. The elder Burrows had purchased his hardware goods from an importer for a number of years, and decided to try to save money by importing his own stock. He proved to be the first Providence merchant to successfully do so. In 1854, at age 61, Joseph Burrows sold his share of the business to his son, Joseph R. Burrows. In 1865, James Kenyon was accepted as a member of the firm, and the company name changed to Burrows and Kenyon. Kenyon had married Caleb Burrows' daughter, Susan, two years earlier (McKinney 1889: 80-81; Providence Board of Trade Journal 1911).

In 1880, the Burrows Block was constructed for Caleb Burrows, in part to serve as an office for the firm. In 1899, the building had stores on the first story, a printing company in the eastern half of the second story, and a pool hall in part of the left half of the second story. The offices of Burrows & Kenyon were located on the third floor of the building. The firm was very successful by 1900, when an advertisement in the Providence City Directory listed it as wholesale and retail dealers of "Northern and Eastern Lumber, Western Hard Wood and all kinds of Pine, North Carolina Pine, Yellow Pine and Cypress" (Sampson & Murdock 1900: 1389). The Burrows & Kenyon Lumber Yard covered the western half of the block now bounded by Lyman, Dean, and Washington streets, and the service road that runs on the west side of Interstate 95. It also covered a large portion of the block that contained the Burrows Block, from the back of the Burrows Block and Lilly Building to Washington Street, and west to Howard Street (and with one lumber shed on the west side of Howard Street) in the northern half of the block between Normal Court and Howard Street (now Wamsutta Place). These large lots contained seven lumber sheds and other storage buildings, which held 195,000 feet of lumber in stock (UPA 1970a). By 1918, the Burrows Block was administered by trustee Edwin O. Chase, he having been admitted to the lumber partnership in 1903. The lumberyard was still located behind the Burrows Block, and continued to expand. Two years later, in 1920, the Burrows Block contained a hall on the third floor, a printing company in the eastern half of the second floor, and two stores (735-737 Westminster), a barber (743), and Pine & Hoffman, a paint shop (745) on the first floor. The lumberyard on the east side of Dean Street had only one small lumber shed remaining, and the yard behind the Burrows block was owned by the United States Rubber Company and used for the storage of automobile tires (UPA 1970b). In 1935, the Glancy Dancing Academy rented a portion of the building, where it remained into the 1960s. In 1944, the Burrows Block had the O'Connor Furniture Store, the Armenian American Citizens Club, Saunder's Printing Co., a shoe repair business, and

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the Avalon Restaurant as its tenants. Morris Hyman acquired the property in 1945, and held it for 14 years before selling to Saul Hodosh in 1959. The 1960s saw the building used by two jewelers, a shoe repair shop, a pawnbroker, and the Haven Spiritualist Church. In 1970, the hall remained on the third floor, while the first floor had a furniture store at 735-741, a store at 743, and a restaurant at 745 (UPA 1970c). Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, the Rhode Island Table Tennis Association was housed in the building. Mr. Hodosh sold the property in 1987 to JLA Realty Associates, who sold it in the same year to the Armory Revival Company. In 1999, the building was transferred to Historic Armory Properties (City of Providence 2002; Polk 1944, 1965, 1970, 1985; Sampson & Murdock 1920, 1935).

Lilly Building, 747-753 Westminster Street

The Lilly Building, at 747-753 Westminster Street, was constructed in 1899, for Charles Allen. Prior to the construction of this building, the site was occupied by the State Normal School on the floor above a dry goods store, and was owned by A.C. Barstow. In 1905, the building housed Henry Cram & Co., a furniture company that sold new and second-hand furniture. Allen and his heirs owned the building until 1920, when it was sold to the Rhode Island Supply Company, a furniture store. In that year, the building had a hall on the fourth floor, and the furniture store below. The building remained a furniture store, though under many different owners, for the next 80 years. The Rhode Island Supply Company owned it until 1946, when it was purchased by Lloyd E. and Maynard M. Bliss, and James F. Armstrong, who sold it to Woodrow's Realty in December 1959. Julian B. Savage purchased the building in 1983. In 1985, the building was occupied by the Herman Myron Company (previously at 705 Westminster). From 1990 to 1998, the building was the home of Herman's Furniture Galleries. In 1999, the building was sold at a tax sale to Saul and Company, who held it for two months before selling to the Armory Revival Company. In 2001, 775 Lofts LLC took control of the building (City of Providence 2002; Hopkins 1875, 1882; Polk 1985, 1998; UPA 1970b).

Bongartz Building, 765-769 Westminster Street

Of these early, post-Civil War commercial structures surviving on the west end of Westminster Street, the Bongartz Building, at 765-769, is the oldest example. This three-story building, constructed circa 1870 for Providence attorney John H. Bongartz, had two storefronts on the first floor, with

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residential and/or office space above. In 1879, Albert Harkness, a professor of classics at Brown University, and grandfather of the Providence architect of the same name, purchased the building (Jordy and Monkhouse 1982: 216). In 1899, the building housed offices on the second floor and a lodge on the third floor. In 1920, the third floor remained a hall, and two stores were located below. Between 1920 and 1960, the building housed many different types of concerns. In 1939, Troup Signs (sign painters), Federated Stores, the Friendly Citizens Club, the Daily Worker Workshop, and the Victory Club shared the building with an optometrist and the Singer Sewing Machine Company. The optometrist, George T. Prescod, remained into the 1950s, alongside jewelers and toy sales, before the building became the home of Woodrow's Modern-Age Inc., a furniture dealer. Members of the Harkness family owned the building until 1960, when it was sold to the Jarose Realty Corporation. Between 1920 and 1970, probably during the 1940s, a storage building behind the block was demolished, and a new, one-story addition to the building was constructed. The building was used by Jacob Licht, Inc., a dealer in store fixtures, kitchen equipment, and appliances beginning in the mid-1960s. In 1986, the building was sold to the JALI Realty Corporation, its current owner. It still houses Licht Industries (City of Providence 2002; Hopkins 1875; Polk 1939, 1955, 1965; Sampson & Murdock; UPA 1970a, 1970b, 1970c).



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### Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description:

(also see accompanying base map for district boundaries)

Beginning at a point at the northeast corner of Westminster and Dean streets,

- east to a point at the southeast corner of Plat 25 Lot 250,
- north, along the east boundary of Lot 250 to the northeast corner of said lot at Lyman Street,
- west to the northwest corner of Plat 25 Lot 249,
- south to the northeast corner of Plat 25, Lot 248,
- west along the north boundary of Plat 25 Lot 248, continuing on same line across Dean Street to west side of Dean Street,
- north to the northeast corner of Plat 29 Lot 121,
- west to the northwest corner of Plat 29 Lot 121,
- north to the northwest corner of Plat 29 Lot 421,
- east to the northeast corner of Plat 29 Lot 421 at Dean Street,
- north along Dean Street to the northeast corner of Plat 29 Lot 122,
- west to the northwest corner of Plat 29 Lot 122,
- south to the northeast corner of Plat 29 Lot 123,
- west to the northwest corner of Plat 29 Lot 123,
- south to the southwest corner of Plat 29 Lot 123 at Westminster Street,
- east along the north side of Westminster Street to the southeast corner of Plat 25 Lot 250, the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification:

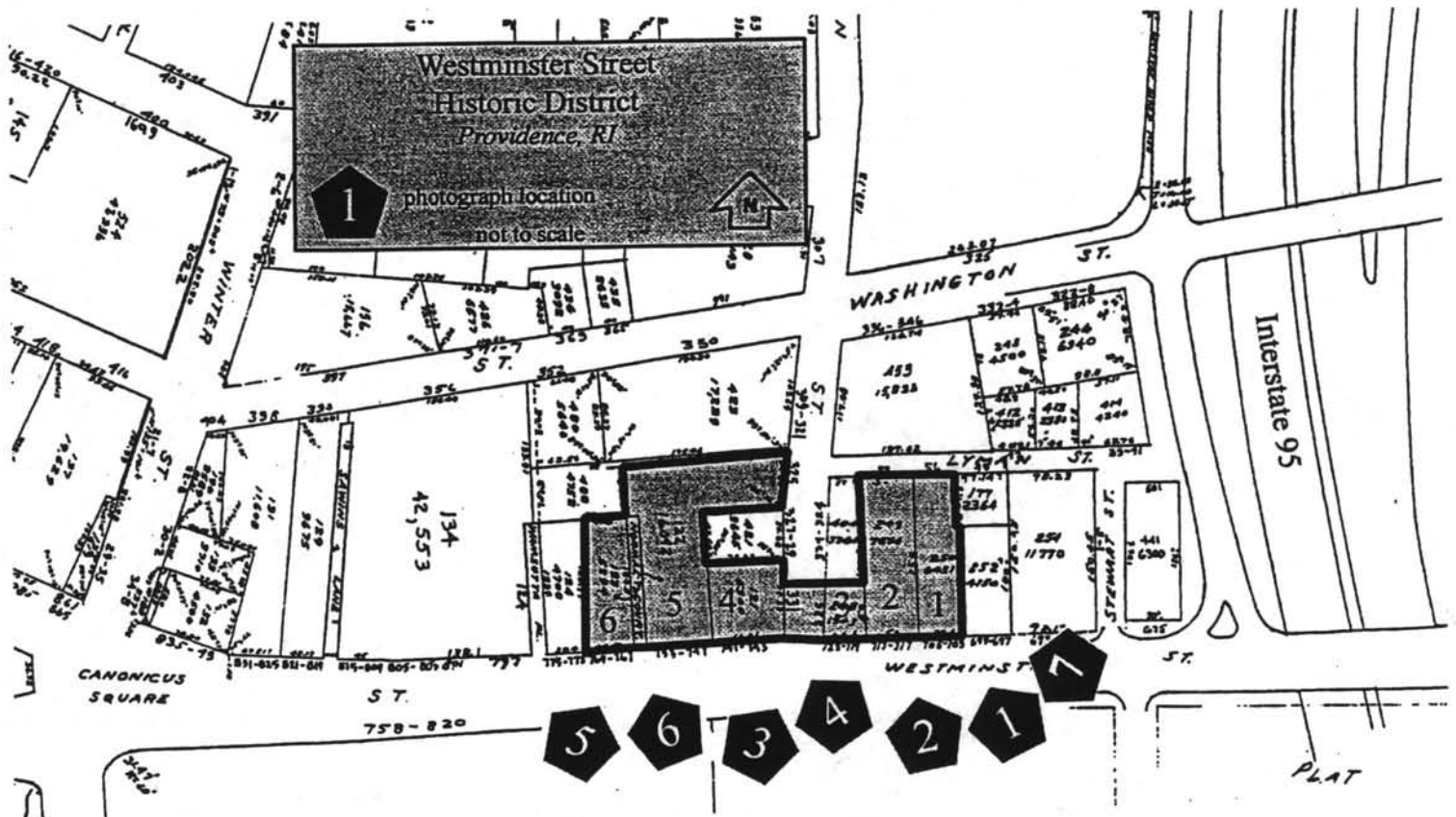
The boundaries include the full extent of contiguous, historic architectural and structural resources associated with commercial activity within the district during its period of significance. The boundaries follow legally recorded property lines and roads. Lines of convenience cross public roads where necessary.

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UTM Coordinates

A 19	0298859	4632180	B 19	0298878	4632195
C 19	0298864	4632211	D 19	0298925	4632217
E 19	0298925	4632217	F 19	0298900	4632211
G 19	0298911	4632198	H 19	0298973	4632227
I 19	0298964	4632240	J 19	0298993	4632260
K 19	0299010	4632226	L 19	0298879	4632153

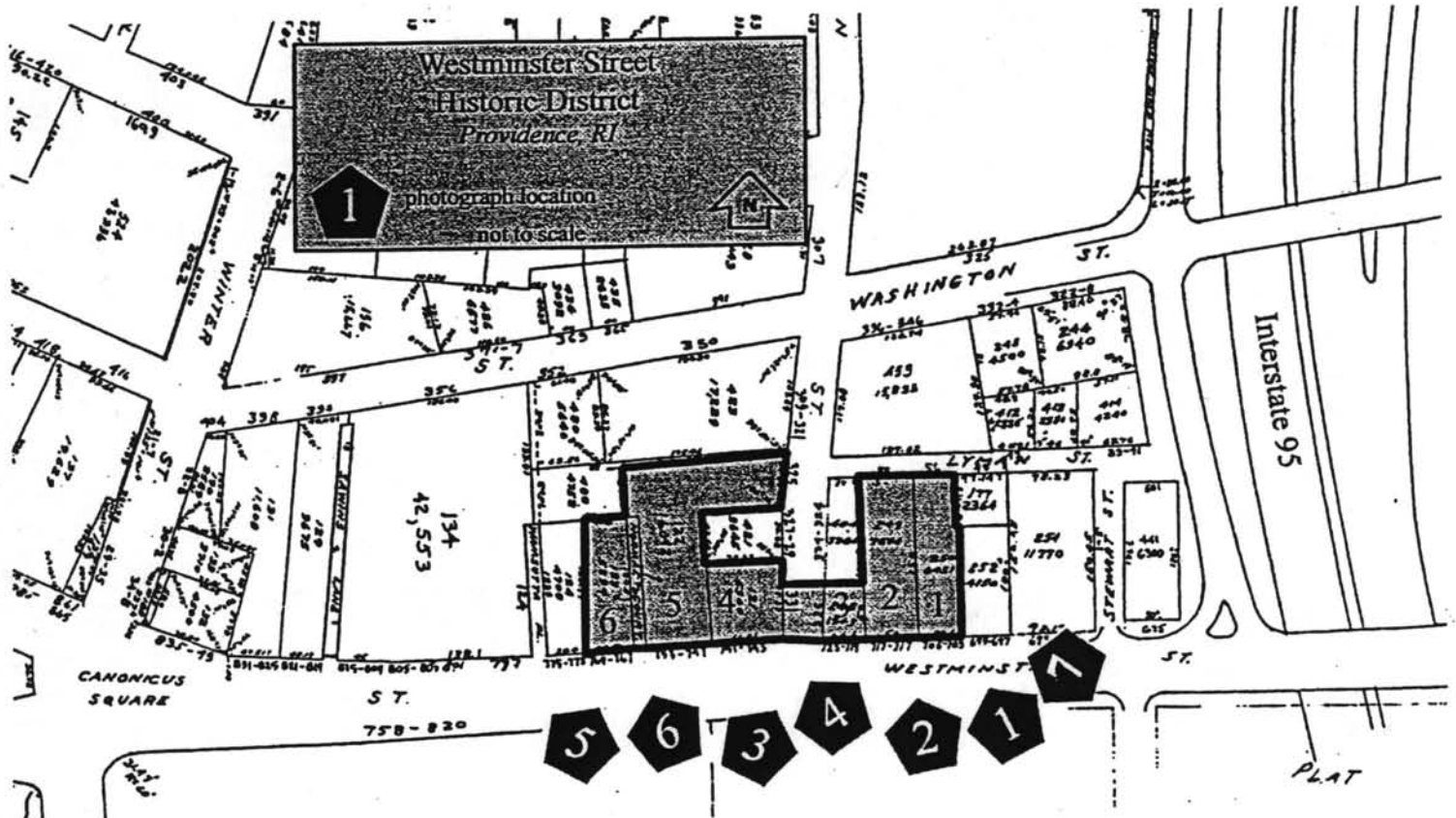
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50'

WESTMINSTER STREET  
 HISTORIC DISTRICT  
 PROVIDENCE  
 PROVIDENCE COUNTY, R.I  
 UTM REFERENCES:

- A: 19|0298859|4632180
- B: 19|0298878|4632195
- C: 19|0298864|4632211
- D: 19|0298925|4632217
- E: 19|0298925|4632217
- F: 19|0298900|4632211
- G: 19|0298911|4632198
- H: 19|0298973|4632227
- I: 19|0298964|4632240
- J: 19|0298993|4632260
- K: 19|0299010|4632226
- L: 19|0298879|4632153

\*32

\*31

\*30

47'30"

\*29



**MOHICAN  
HOTEL**

ROOMS  
\$20  
BEST  
SPOT-LITE

7:00 PM PARKING

WESTMINSTER

PARIS RESTAURANT

WESTMINSTER STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

PROVIDENCE, PROVIDENCE COUNTY, RHODE ISLAND

PHOTO #3

POMERANTZ

STAGING ALTERNATIVES

S CHIAPPINA BUILDING

705

DRIVERS

CHOFERES

401-351-5590

CHIAPPINELLI BUILDING

WESTMINSTER STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

PROVIDENCE, PROVIDENCE COUNTY, RHODE ISLAND

PHOTO #1



S CHIA

PCG

BANK!  
418-1000

NO PARKING  
EXCEPT FOR  
LOADING  
& UNLOADING  
12

THE HAMPSHIRE

WESTMINSTER STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

PROVIDENCE, PROVIDENCE COUNTY, RHODE ISLAND

PHOTO # 2



1330



BURROWS BLOCK

WESTMINSTER STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

PROVIDENCE, PROVIDENCE COUNTY, RHODE ISLAND

PHOTO # 4



MENT  
NEW &  
USED

JACOB  
LIGHT  
RESTAURANT EQUIPMENT  
AND SUPPLIES

FURNITURE

LILLY BUILDING  
WESTMINSTER STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT  
PROVIDENCE, PROVIDENCE COUNTY, RHODE ISLAND

PHOTO #5



JONGART BUILDING

**JACOB LICHT** INC. RESTAURANT EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES  
NEW & USED

JACOB LICHT  
RESTAURANT EQUIPMENT  
AND SUPPLIES



BONGARTZ BUILDING

WESTMINSTER STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

PROVIDENCE, PROVIDENCE COUNTY, RHODE ISLAND

PHOTO #6



POMIANTZ  
Staffing

PCG

PCG

PCG

DRIVERS  
CHOFERES  
42-32-8888

705

WESTMINSTER STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT

PROVIDENCE, PROVIDENCE COUNTY, RHODE ISLAND

PHOTO #7