

PROPERTY NAME Fleur-de-Lys Studios

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

**1. NAME OF PROPERTY**

Historic Name: Fleur-de-Lys Studios

Other Name/Site Number: Sydney Burleigh Studio

**2. LOCATION**

Street & Number: 7 Thomas Street

Not for publication: N/A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

Category of Property

Private: X  
Public-local:      
Public-State:      
Public-Federal:    

Building(s): X  
District:      
Site:      
Structure:      
Object:    

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

Noncontributing

  1    
     
     
     
  1  

  0   buildings  
    sites  
    structures  
    objects  
  0   Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register:   1  

Name of related multiple property listing:   N/A

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**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   meets   does not meet the National Register Criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Certifying Official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal Agency and Bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
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 \_\_\_\_\_
- Determined eligible for the \_\_\_\_\_  
National Register
- Determined not eligible for the \_\_\_\_\_  
National Register
- Removed from the National Register \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

Historic: OTHER Sub: artists' studios

Current: OTHER Sub: artists' studios

**7. DESCRIPTION**

Architectural Classification:  
Tudor Revival

Materials:  
Foundation: BRICK  
Walls: WOOD/shingle

Roof: ASPHALT  
Other Description: STUCCO/facade panels

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**Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**

Standing near the foot of College Hill on the north side of densely-built, one-block-long Thomas Street, the Fleur-de-Lys Studios is a two-and-a-half story, wood-frame building with a prominent half-timbered facade elaborately embellished with decorative stucco. The simply finished interior has large, north-lighted studios at the rear (north) of the building and smaller studios on the south side. Save for creation of additional studio space within the attic story, the building appears now as it did in the plans drawn in 1885, when it was built, and the photographs taken of the building upon its occupation on 1 January 1886.

The building's setting is important and largely unaltered from the time of its completion. Late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century dwellings line the north side of Thomas Street, a one-block link between Benefit and North Main Streets. Buildings on Thomas Street are tightly serried when not abutting; their side and rear elevations are at best little visible. The 1774 First Baptist Meeting House (NHL) occupies the full block on the street's south side. Across Waterman Street, on the south side of the First Baptist Meeting House, is the original building of Rhode Island School of Design.

The Fleur-de-Lys's emblematic facade is the focus of exterior architectural articulation of the end-gable-roof, rectangular-plan building approximately thirty feet wide, forty feet deep, and forty-three-feet high at the crest of the roof. The half-timbered facade is broadly divided into two bays, defined by semi-octagonal oriels on the first and second stories and prismatic oriels in the projecting attic story; it resembles "two loosely angled folding-screens placed one above the other in front of the basically rectangular building." The entrance is set within the left (west) bay. All windows are leaded multiple-pane casement windows.

The plastered panels of the historiated facade are highly decorated with low-relief Proto-Art Nouveau sculpture, some painted, some left natural. Panels within the porch are inscribed with "BURLEIGH" in a cartouche and "THE FLEUR-DE-LYS STUDIOS" on ribbons. Above the entrance, three quatrefoil panels bear the inscriptions from left to right, "B," a stylized fleur-de-lys, and "1885." A large rectangular panel on the right (east) side of the bay window bears a bunch of stylized iris set within a round arch carried on crocketed pilasters and the legend "THOU ART THE IRIS FAIR AMONG THE FAIREST" on a ribbon woven through the flowers. In the attic story, three large panels bear allegorical figures representing the visual arts: Sculpture on the left, Painting at center, and Architecture on the right.

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<sup>1</sup>Edgar Kaufmann, "Some American Architectural Ornament of the Arts and Crafts Era," Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 24 (December 1965), p. 287.

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Framing these panels are portraits of Burleigh on the left, full-face and wearing a tam-o'-shanter, and Mrs. Burleigh on the right, in profile and wearing a conical hat and ruff. Other panels are filled with sinuous garlands, birds, and animals.

The interior is divided vertically into a full first story, a mezzanine on the south side of the building, and a full second story. The entrance opens into a small vestibule and stairs to the upper stories. The enclosed staircase runs straight up from the vestibule and ends with winders at the top. At right is the entrance to the first-story studio, with a reception room and classroom on the south side and a large studio across the north side. The studio has a staircase at its southwest corner to the mezzanine-level gallery and a large fireplace centered on the west wall. Staircase and gallery balusters are flat with curved sawn designs. The brick fireplace is decorated with old tiles from an inn in Dordrecht, Holland, set within red plaster "modeled to represent some basket-woven reed dykes in Dordrecht."<sup>2</sup> At the mezzanine level, the gallery opens onto the stairhall, and a small studio is located over the building's entrance. On the second story are smaller studios located over the mezzanine studio and the first-story classroom and a large studio with fireplace on the north side above the first-story studio.

Interior detail is quite simple. As Kaufmann notes:

The stair hall, with a solid board parapet and pinnacled upright posts, is clearly derived from Webb's house for William Morris. Some plaster panels are countersunk with ready-made stamps and other motifs.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Sarah D. Burleigh, "The Burleigh Studio Building," reprinted in George L. Miner, Angell's Lane (Providence, 1948), p. 157.

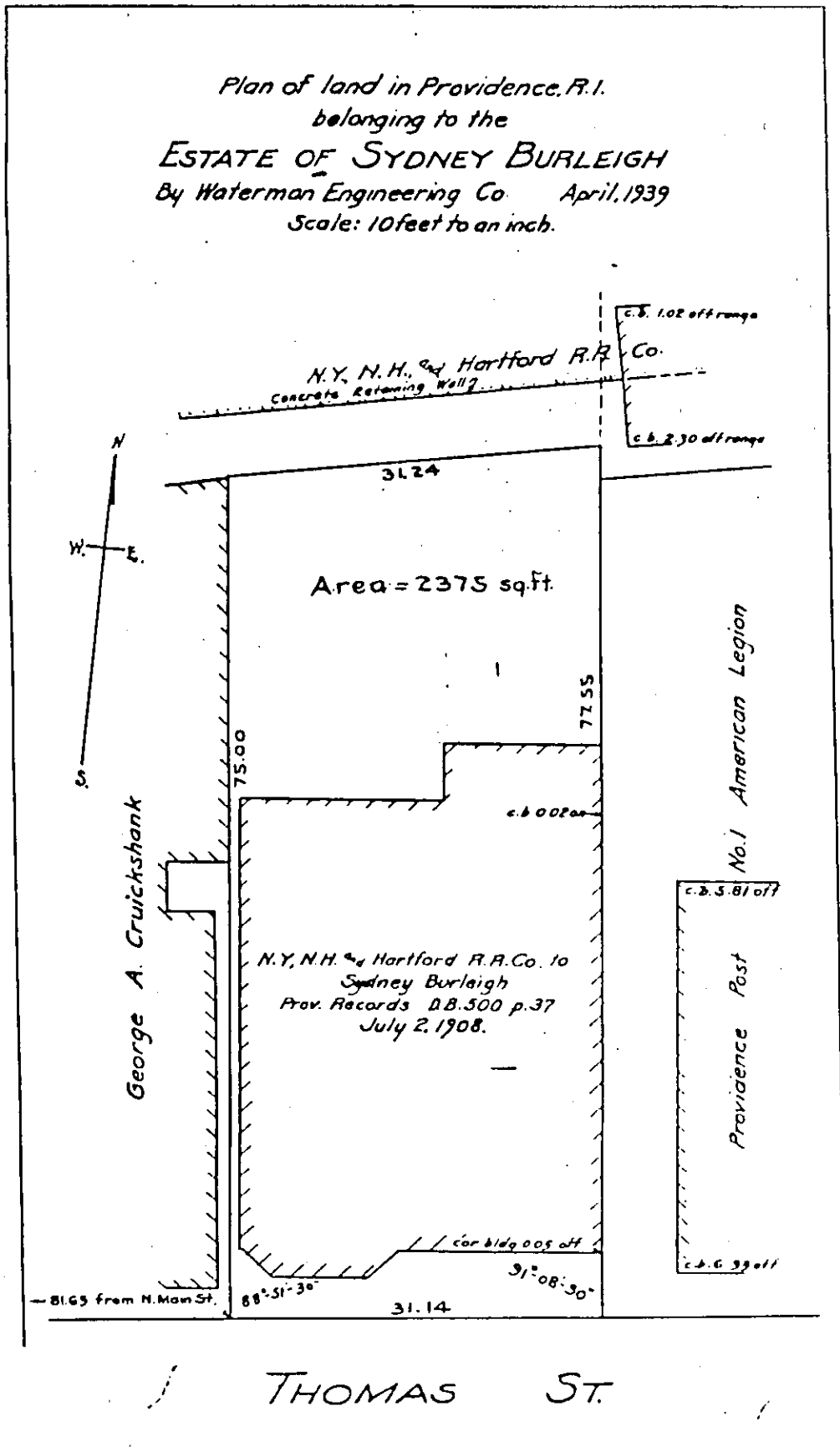
<sup>3</sup>Kaufmann, p. 290.

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Fleur-de-Lys Studios, 7 Thomas Street, Providence, Rhode Island  
Site plan--Sketch Map, not to scale



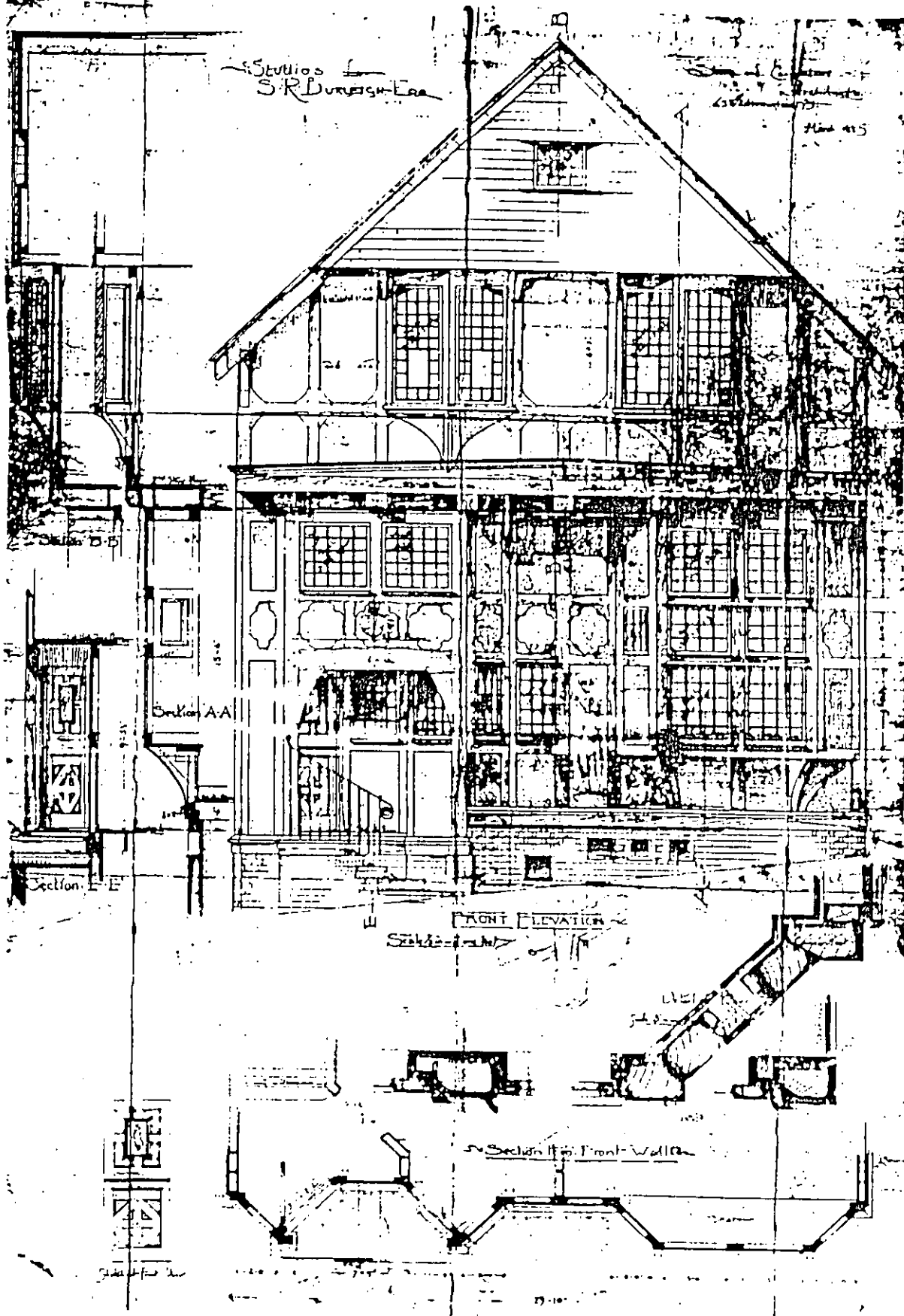
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Fleur-de-Lys Studios, 7 Thomas Street, Providence, Rhode Island  
Facade elevation and section through front wall, drawing by Stone & Carpenter, 1885--Reduced  
from original, not to scale



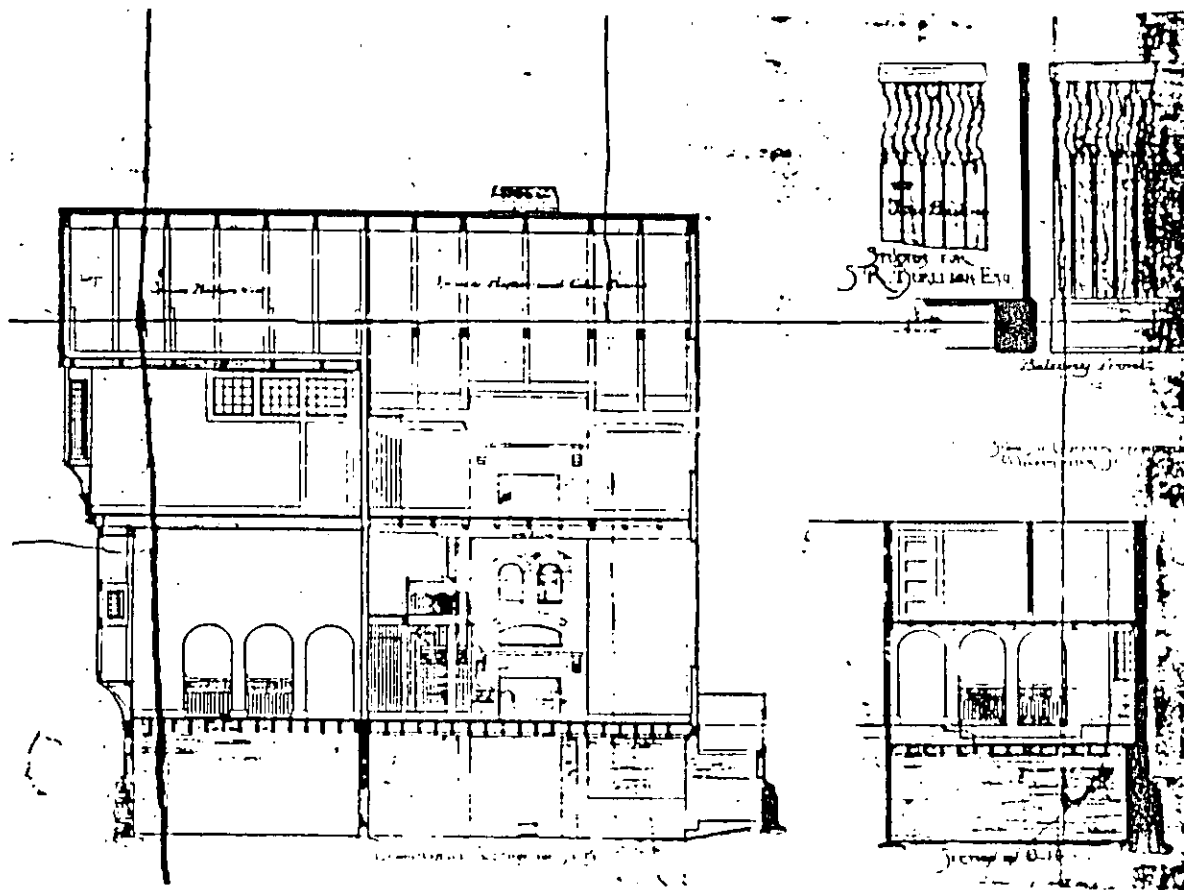
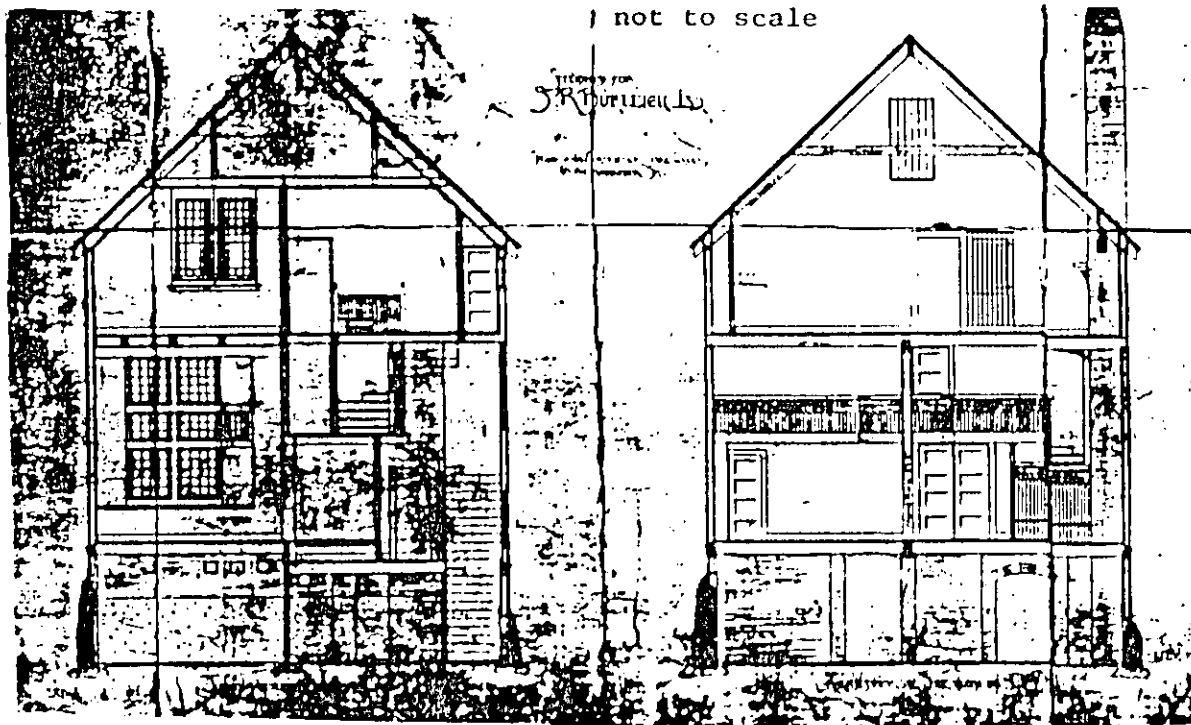
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Fleur-de-Lys Studios, 7 Thomas Street, Providence, Rhode Island

Traverse and longitudinal sections, drawing by Stone & Carpenter, 1885--Reduced from original  
not to scale



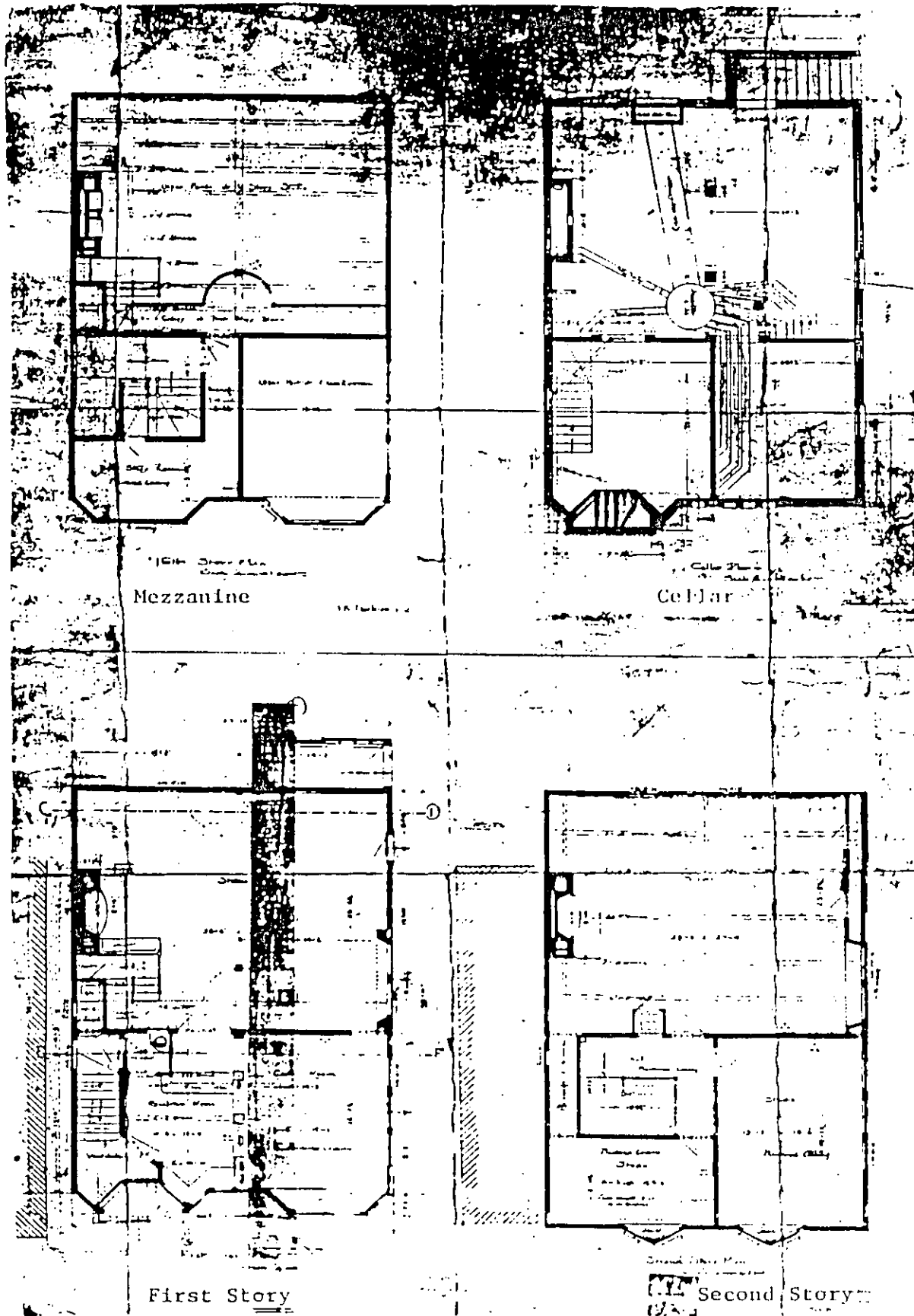


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Fleur-de-Lys Studios, 7 Thomas Street, Providence, Rhode Island  
Plans, drawing by Stone & Carpenter, 1885--Reduced from original, not to scale



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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Nationally:\_\_\_ Statewide:\_\_\_ Locally:\_\_\_

Applicable National Register Criteria: A\_\_\_ B\_\_\_ C X D\_\_\_

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A\_\_\_ B\_\_\_ C\_\_\_ D\_\_\_ E\_\_\_ F\_\_\_ G\_\_\_

NHL Criteria: 1, 4

NHL Theme(s): XVI. Architecture M. Period Revivals 3. Craftsman XXIV. Painting and Sculpture E. European Influences

Areas of Significance:	Period(s) of Significance	Significant Dates
<u>Architecture</u>	<u>1885-1931</u>	<u>1885-86</u>
<u>Painting and Sculpture</u>	<u>1885-1931</u>	<u>1885-86</u>

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Edmund Russell Willson, partner in Stone, Carpenter & Willson, in collaboration with Sydney Richmond Burleigh and the Art Workers Guild

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**State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.**

The Fleur-de-Lys Studios is a key architectural monument to the American Arts and Crafts Movement.<sup>4</sup> It is significant in the history of the movement itself and in the history of American architecture.

The Arts and Crafts Movement was well established in England by the early 1880s.<sup>5</sup> The multifaceted movement, generally understood as a reaction to nineteenth-century industrialization, emphasized the process of producing works of art by hand. It advocated unifying the arts and making art a part of everyday life. The Fleur-de-Lys embodies the very characteristics of the movement, which emerged full blown in this country only in the later 1880s and 1890s.

The building's design is the product of a collaboration by painter Sydney R. Burleigh and architect Edmund R. Willson, a principal in the Providence firm of Stone, Carpenter & Willson. Both men achieved considerable professional prominence during their lifetimes. Burleigh studied painting between 1876 and 1880 in Paris under Jean Paul Laurens, the teacher of many prominent American pupils. He quickly became the leader of the art community in Rhode Island: he served on the Board of Directors of the Rhode Island School of Design from 1887 to 1893 and on its Board of Trustees from 1919 until his death in 1931. Burleigh was also active in national art circles and, like many notable late nineteenth-century artists, exhibited regularly at the National Academy of Design in New York, the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia, and Rhode Island School of Design. Willson, like his mentor Charles Follen McKim, had attended Harvard College and the Ecole des Beaux-arts.<sup>6</sup> Willson's work received high critical acclaim in prestigious professional journals, especially American Architect and Building News,<sup>7</sup> and, more recently, increasing attention by scholars of

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<sup>4</sup>Kaufmann op. cit., p. 285, refers to the building as "apparently unique example ... here submitted to wider scrutiny."

<sup>5</sup>For a full discussion of origins of the movement, see Wendy Kaplan, "The Lamp of British Precedent: An Introduction to the Arts and Crafts Movement," "The Art that is Life": The Arts and Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920, Boston, 1987, pp. 52-60.

<sup>6</sup>For discussion of the influence of the Ecole des Beaux-arts on the Arts and Crafts Movement, see Richard Guy Wilson, "American Arts and Crafts Architecture: Radical though Dedicated to the Cause Conservative," "The Art that is Life", p. 107.

<sup>7</sup>Willson's extensive obituary was published in American Architect and Building News 91 (9 February 1907): 67-72.

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American architectural history.<sup>8</sup>

Both Burleigh and Willson were involved in the building's design. According to Mrs. Burleigh, the studio was "built after the style of old half-timbered buildings in Chester, England, where Mr. Burleigh had been recently staying...."<sup>9</sup> Willson, too, knew Chester from trips there between 1879 and 1881 while he was a student at the Ecole des Beaux-arts, and his sketchbooks record Chester's picturesque medieval buildings:

Construction was executed by local builders and Burleigh's Art Workers Guild. This was the first of several collaborations of the Art Workers Guild. Established in 1885 by Burleigh, John G. Aldrich and Charles Walter Stetson, the Art Workers Guild was named after the similar-spirited organization founded in London in 1884.<sup>10</sup> The Art Workers Guild reflects the rise of interest in decorative arts that occurred around 1880; other groups include the New York Society of Decorative Arts (1877), Louis Comfort Tiffany's Company of Associated Artists (1879), and the Rookwood Pottery (1880) in Cincinnati. The group remained active in Rhode Island until the end of the 1880s, and "historians have credited the Providence group as among the movement's pioneers in the establishment of the English guild concept in America."<sup>11</sup> Other extant commissions by the Art Workers Guild include interiors for the Lyman Klapp House (1886-1888), 217 Hope Street, Providence, and the Adelaide T. Slicer House (1886-1887), 581 West Main Road, Little Compton, Rhode Island; both houses were also designed by Edmund R. Willson. Commissions for the Dr. Clarence Gardiner House (ca 1887), also Willson, and the Providence Masonic Temple (1884-1886), Frederick E. Field, architect, have been lost to hurricane and fire.

The building's unification of the three visual arts is emphasized by the three allegorical figures in the pediment. They make explicit the importance of the philosophical integration of

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<sup>8</sup>For recent evaluation of Willson's work see William H. Jordy and Christopher P. Monkhouse, Buildings On Paper: Rhode Island Architectural Drawings, 1825-1940 (Providence, 1982) and Karen L. Jessup, "The Architecture of Edmund R. Willson (1856-1906) (Master's Thesis, Graduate School, Boston University, 1983).

<sup>9</sup>Miner, p. 156.

<sup>10</sup>Aldrich (1864-1952) had just graduated from Worcester Polytechnic Institute when he became involved with the Art Workers Guild. Stetson (1858-1911) was an oil painter with an international reputation during his lifetime. For a fuller evaluation of Stetson's career, see Charles C. Eldredge, Charles Walter Stetson: Color and Fantasy (Lawrence, Kansas, 1982) and Mary Hill, ed. Endure: the Diaries of Charles Walter Stetson (Philadelphia, 1985).

<sup>11</sup>Eldredge, p. 42.

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the three arts realized here. Moreover, the involvement of the Art Workers Guild in the plastering and creation of interior decoration united the fine and practical arts. As Kaufmann notes, "the unity of the arts is incorporated here in an example probably unparalleled in American architecture for the fusion of the useful and ornamental arts."<sup>12</sup>

The studio not only embodied the fine and practical arts, but also made them public, a part of daily life.

The whole city was interested and many were stirred, beholding a symbol of something vaguely important. The carved beams and plaster reliefs of this quaint building were fascinating indeed, but beyond that the very fact that anyone should build a studio building for painters was startling. The new structure was more than an ordinary business venture, it was a public monument—a symbol of the progress the community had made in its flowering art culture, and a declaration of faith by the painters, faith in the importance of their painting and of their place in the life of the city.<sup>13</sup>

Providence was the ideal breeding ground for the first flowering of the Arts & Crafts movement. By the early 1880s, it had the critical combination of heavy industrialization, civic and cultural ambition, and a rapidly developing artistic community.

The American Industrial Revolution, begun in adjacent Pawtucket at Slater Mill (NHL) in 1790, was first financed by Providence capital. Providence developed in the nineteenth century as the industrial center of a rapidly increasing industrial hinterland. The city itself was home to internationally important plants—including Brown & Sharpe, Nicholson File, and Corliss Steam Engine Works—while its radiating river valleys were lined with the textile mill villages owned and operated by B. B. & R. Knight, Brown & Ives, and the Metcalf family, founders of Rhode Island School of Design.

Providence saw considerable institutional development during the 1860s, 1870s, and 1880s. Signaling the city's emergence as a metropolis were new streetcar lines (1864 et seq.), public water supply (1870 et seq.), extensive public-school-building programs in the 1870s and 1880s, a new City Hall (1874-1878), and the establishment of major institutions, including Rhode Island Hospital (1863), Roger Williams Park (1871), Providence Opera House (1871), Providence Public Library (1874), Rhode Island School of Design (1877), and the Providence Art Club (1880). The city was growing not only in size (from 50,666 in 1860 to 118,070 in 1885) but also in complexity and sophistication. The critical

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<sup>12</sup>Kaufmann, p. 291.

<sup>13</sup>Miner, p. 154.

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mass of a large population virtually required institutional growth, but in Providence it acquired a more artistic cast than in other similar sized cities.

As early as the 1850s, the Rhode Island Art Association had lobbied, albeit unsuccessfully, for an art gallery and school of design, and the Group of 1855 represented an informal attempt by local artists to associate themselves in loose organization. The founding of the Rhode Island School of Design in 1877 and the Providence Art Club in 1880, however, realized a permanent artistic presence in the city. Importantly, the creators and inhabitants of the Fleur-de-Lys were intimately associated with both organizations.<sup>14</sup>

Burleigh, Stetson, Aldrich, and other occupants of the Fleur-de-Lys reacted negatively to American technological advancement and sought relief from the "hard edges of industrialization and the visual pollution of an urbanizing city space."<sup>15</sup> Stetson referred to the building as a "...unique and mysterious domain of art...a building misunderstood by the people, disliked by the perfectly modern and neat, and beloved by us who harbor there...."<sup>16</sup> The Fleur-de-Lys was, on the one hand, a retreat both philosophically and architecturally for its artist occupants from the industrial city as well as, on the other hand, a permanent cultural reminder in that industrial city.

Upon completion, the building received national attention. The interiors were published in Art and Decoration in May 1886, and the exterior appeared in American Architect and Building News on 10 May 1890. In 1896,

One writer described it as "a unique cozy-looking structure which time will mellow and fashion dignify." He determined that "Providence is just the picturesque city for such a building, and its citizens are doubtless pleased with the artistic sentiments of its two worthy artists," Stetson and Burleigh.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup>Charles Walter Stetson and George W. Whitaker were founding members of the Art Club and original inhabitants of the Fleur-de-Lys. Burleigh, abroad at the time of the club's founding, joined it immediately upon his return. His association with Rhode Island School of Design is noted above.

<sup>15</sup>Mary Hill, ed., The Diaries of Charles Walter Stetson (Philadelphia, 1985), p. xxxiii.

<sup>16</sup>Charles Walter Stetson, "The Studio," unidentified clipping from the Providence press, ca 1892, cited in Eldredge, p. 37.

<sup>17</sup>Eldredge, p. 37.

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Art and Decoration (May 1886), (May, 1896)

American Architect and Building News 750 (10 May 1890).

Eldredge, Charles C. Charles Walter Stetson: Color and Fantasy. Lawrence, Kansas, 1982.

Hill, Mary, ed. Endure: The Diaries of Charles Walter Stetson. Philadelphia, 1985.

Jessup, Karen L. "The Architecture of Edmund R. Willson (1856-1906)." Master's Thesis, Graduate School, Boston University, 1983.

Kaufmann, Edgar Jr. "Some American Architectural Ornament of the Arts and Crafts Era." Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 24 (December 1965): 285-291

Miner, George L. Angell's Lane. Providence, 1948.

Wilson, Richard Guy. "American Arts and Crafts Architecture: Radical though Dedicated to the Cause Conservative." "The Art That Is Life": The Arts & Crafts Movement in America, 1875-1920. Boston, 1987.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register.
- 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: R.I. Historical Preservation Commission

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**Acreage of Property: less than one acre, c. 2375 square feet

UTM References: Zone Northing Easting Zone Northing Easting

A	<u>19</u>	<u>299920</u>	<u>4633240</u>	B	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
C	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	D	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
E	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	F	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

Verbal Boundary Description:

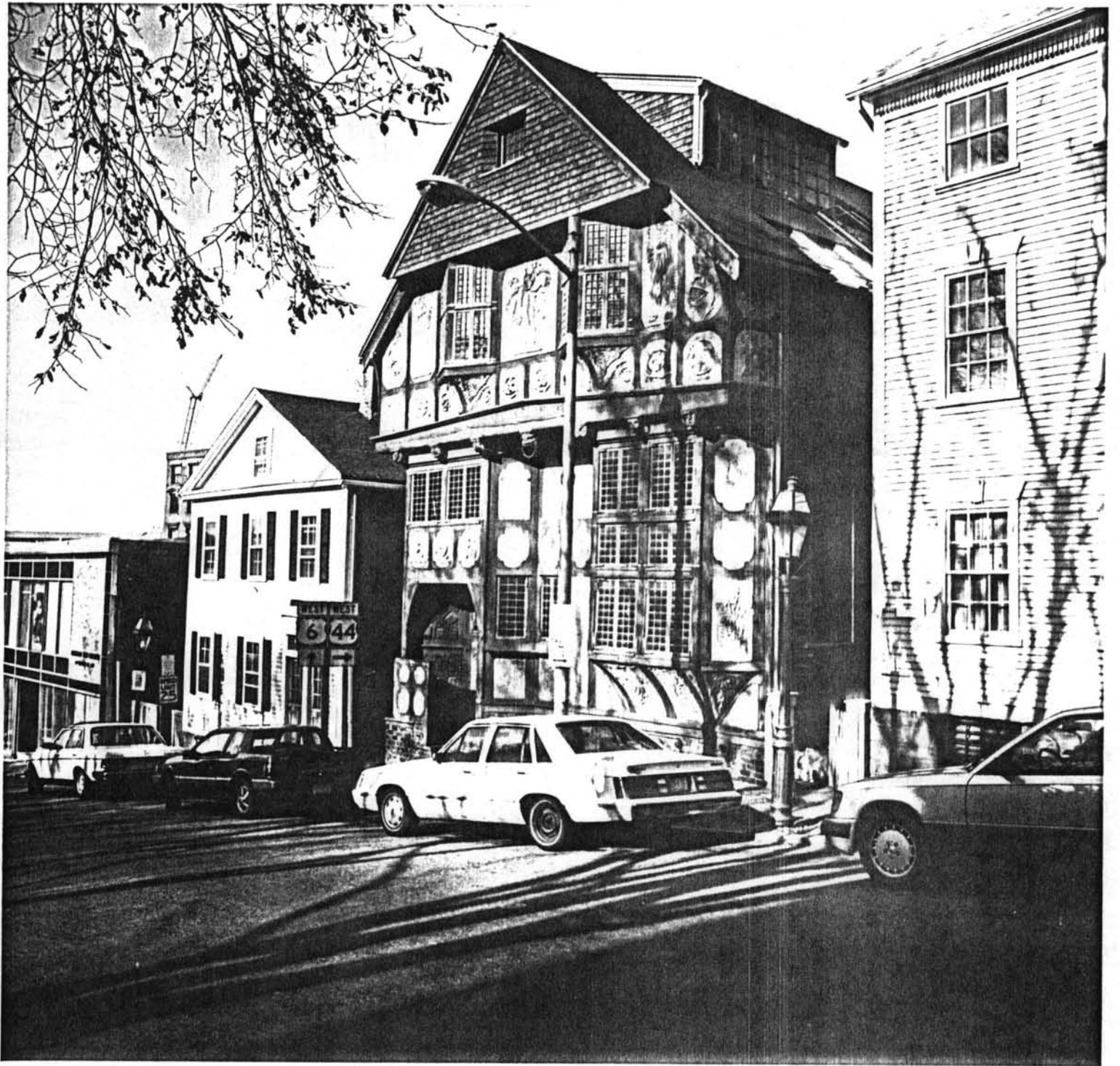
The property nominated coincides with Providence Tax Assessor's Plat 10 Lot 481.

Boundary Justification:

The property nominated coincides with the land historically associated with the property since the building's construction.

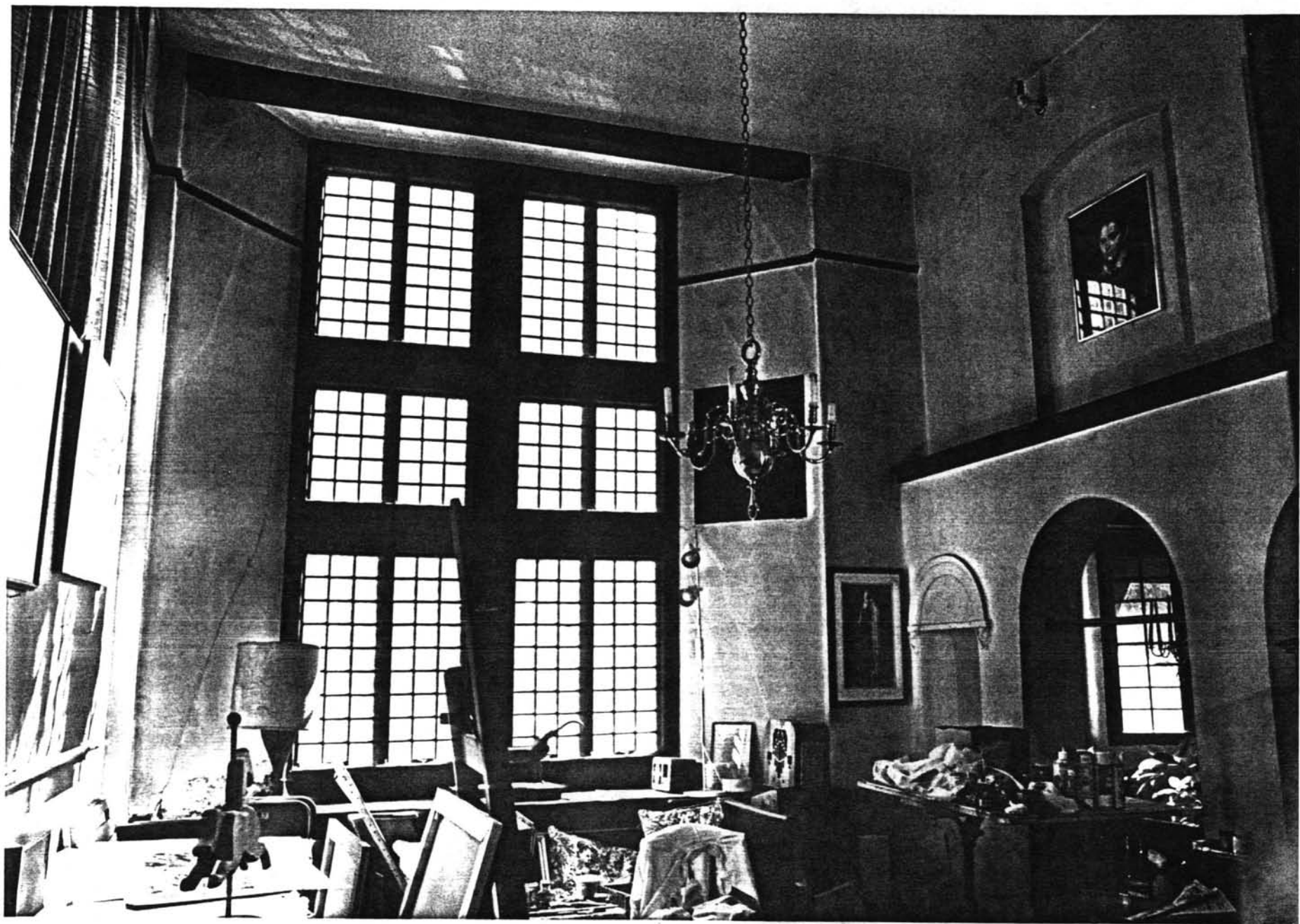
**11. FORM PREPARED BY**Name/Title: Wm McKenzie Woodward, Principal Historic PreservationOrg.: R.I. Historical Preservation CommissionDate: June, 1991Street/#: 150 Benefit StreetCity/Town: ProvidenceState: Rhode IslandZIP: 02903Edited by: M. Carolyn Pitts, National Park ServiceTelephone: 202-343-8166Date: April 9, 1992



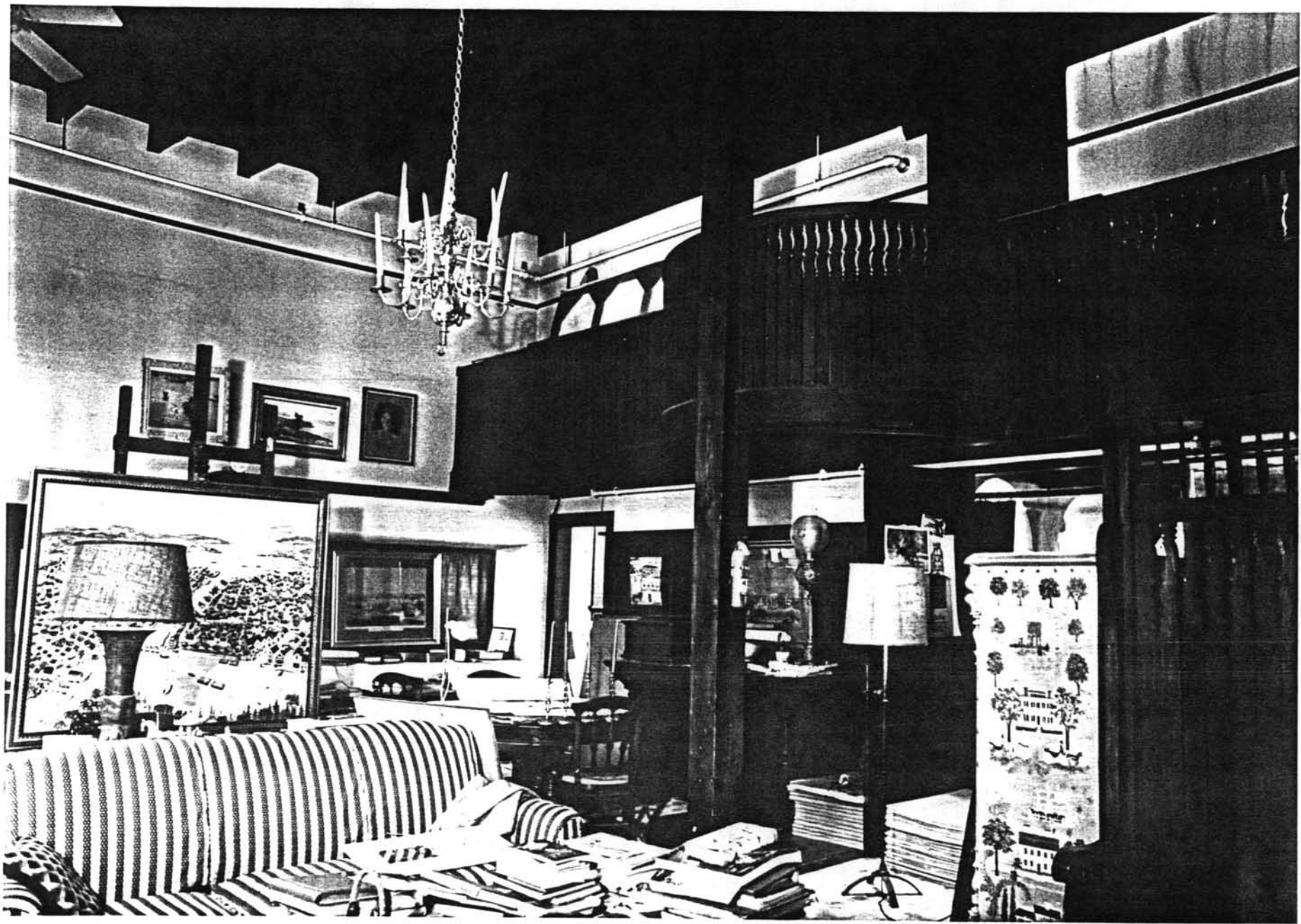




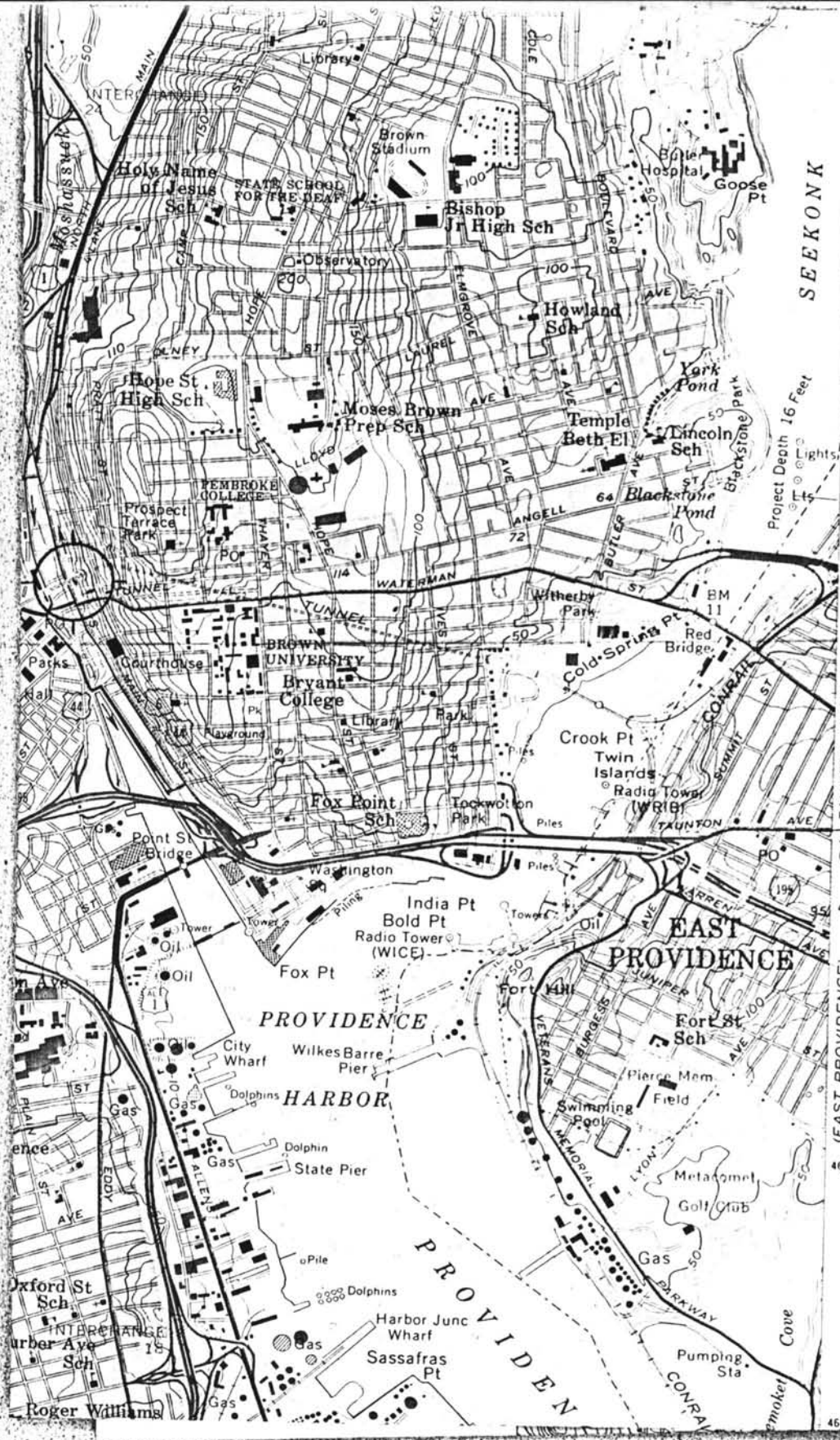












4635

SEEKONK

4634

50'

*Fleur-de-Lys Studios  
7 Thomas Street*

*19-294920-4633240*

TAUNTON, MASS. 16 MI.  
PLYMOUTH, MASS. 42 MI.

4632

(EAST PROVIDENCE)  
6767 IV SE  
RIVERSIDE 4 MI.  
BARRINGTON 7.5 MI.

4631

4630

RUMFORD 3.4 MI.  
8.9 MI. TO U.S. 1

SOUTH SEEKONK, MASS. 3.5 MI.  
FALL RIVER, MASS. 15 MI.

Project Depth 16 Feet  
Lights  
Ets

44

103

6