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Completed by 1876, the Elizabeth Building was part of a boom in the contruction of commercial buildings in Providence during the 1870's and 1880's. (As this building is first mentioned in the Providence rusiness directory of 1876, it is logical to conclude that it was erected in 1875 or 187h-1875 and--although the architect has not been identified--that it was designed by one of the twenty-one local architects or firms listed in the 1875 directory. At this time such cast-iron structures as the Equitable Building, by Walker and Gould, and the Hoppin Homestead Building, by James Bucklin, were also being erected here. These Providence "cast-iron fronts" were of four storeys only, on contrast to the higher structures of the same type seen in New York City.

The black-painted cast-iron front^{*} of the Elizabeth Building not only forms the main (east) street façade but also wraps around a twobay section of the south side of the slender but massive rectangular structure (otherwise brick-walled), extending the ornamental detailing around an angle viewed from approaching streets. An 1891 photograph of the building shows the upper storeys of the iron front painted in a light colour, no doubt imitating stone, as such ironwork was intended to imitate. While the cast-iron east façade is divided into four storeys, the building actually contains five storeys, as the brick side and rear elevations reveal. The fifth floor is masked on the east elevation by a windowless mansard roof with ribbed metal covering.

Each floor of the iron front is divided from the next by a deep entablature with brackets in the frieze. These frieze brackets connect the vertical impetus begun at the base by the (now free-standing) fluted Corinthian columns with the Doric pilasters of the upper floors. A central accent is created by the groupingg of the façade's five bays: the three middle bays are set between a wider bay at each end. At firstfloor level the end bays both originally contained entrances (at present, there is only one, in the north bay). On the upper floors the three central bays each contain one window; the end bays contain paired window openings. On each floor these bays are separated by four fluted Doric pilasters into a configuration of aa-b-b-b-aa. The angles of the building are marked by panelled Doric pilasters at each floor level; the upper portions of their panels contain stylised floral ornament. The plain brick back and side walls of the building are pierced by a variety of window arrangements with strongly projecting and varied cast-iron cappings.

The interior of this building is of extremely simple plan. Directly inside the north, street-level entrance is a hall which contains an iron stircase and an elevator. Offices now fill the rest of this floor, doubtless originally devoted to shop space. Upper floors contain, as always, variously subdivided office space.

(See Continuation Sheet.)

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Form 10-300g (July 1969)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

STATE Rhode Island

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

COUNTY Providence

FOR NPS USE ONLY

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

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(Number all entries)

7. Description.

Alterations on the exterior are minor. The original glazed shopfronts of the ground floor were in 1960 replaced by Philemon Sturges with a marble curtain wall recessed behind the stone-based iron Corinthian columns and corner piers. A section of cornice on the north side is missing; a columned store-front at the south-east has been filled in with brick. These changes, however, do not interfere with the over-all form and ornament of the Elizabeth Building or with its architectural integrity.

* Information has been received that the cast-iron structural and decorative elements of the Elizabeth Building were produced in Providence by the Builders Iron Foundry (still existing under the name of B.I.F. Industries).

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PERIOD (Check One of More as	Appropriate)		
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15th Century	17th Century	🕅 19th Century	
SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicat	ile and Known) C. 1871	1-1875	
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As one of the few cast-iron fronts remaining in Providence, the Elizabeth building has an important place in the historic and architectural fabric of its city. It is representative of a period when commercial architecture was becoming, in both volume and design, conspicuous on the American scene. The age of the cast-iron-framed and ornamented business building has been called the precursor of our modern age of the steel and glass skyscraper. Immensely popular as cast-iron architecture was across the country, for decades, comparatively few examples remain in any of our cities now.

Those examples which we still have, and those which we can now see only in photographs, are handsome and disciplined structures--as is the Elizabeth Building. Cast-iron may have permitted variety and elaboration of textural or sculptural forms (particularly capitals, cartouches etc.), but the discipline imposed by the use of pre-made, uniform structural and ornamental members prevented the often-incoherent mixtures of shapes and styles seen in many other coeval buildings.

Where it stands, the Elizabeth building is also important in its immediate architectural and visual context--a three- or four-block stretch of shop and office or loft buildings which are roughly contemporary with it, similar in height and "weight." At the base of College Hill, with its treasures of residential architecture, this row of hundred-year-old commercial buildings forms an important retaining wall and a good screen against the open and often ugly traffic spaces and the heterogeneous business and governmental structures of the modern downtown immediately to the west.

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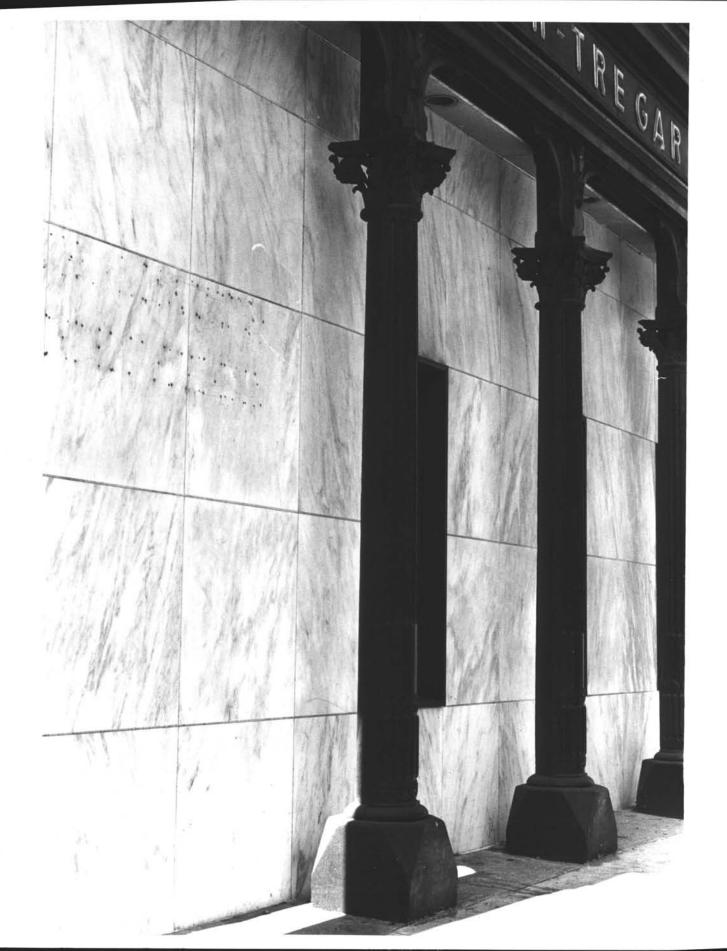
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NATIONAL	ARR SERVICE	Rhode Island	
NATIONAL REGISTER	Providence FOR NPS USE ONLY		
PROPERTY PHOTO			
	ENTRY NUMBER	DAT	
(Type all entries - attach to	o or enclose with photograph)		
1. NAME			-
COMMON: Elizabeth Building			
AND/OR HISTORIC:			
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
100 North Main Stre	et		
CITY OR TOWN:			
Providence			
STATE:	CODE COUNTY:		co
Rhode Island	44 Pro	vidence	00
3. PHOTO REFERENCE			
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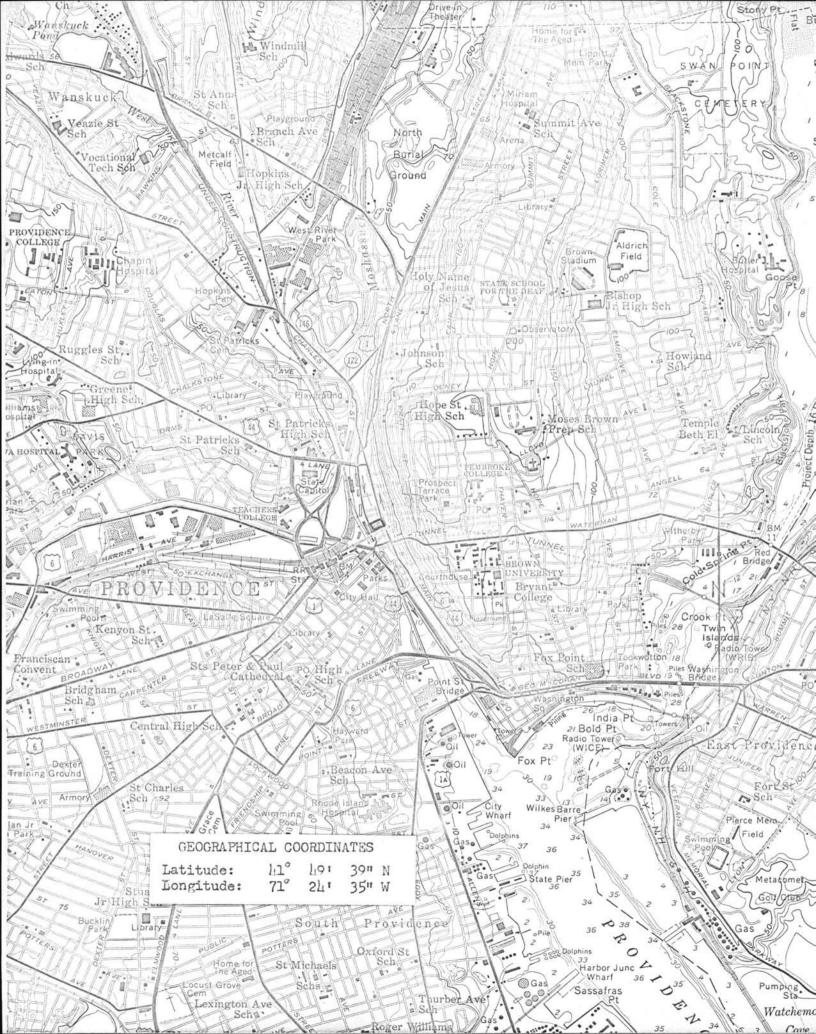
UNITED STATES DEPARTMEN NATIONAL PARK		STATE Rhode Island				
NATIONAL REGISTER OF	HISTORIC PLACES	COUNTY Providence				
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	UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL PARK SERV	THE INTERIOR	STA	Rhode Island	
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	(Type all entries - attach to or enclo	se with phot	ograph)	ENTRY NUMBER	DATE				
1. N	AME								
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5	STREET AND NUMBER: 100 North Main Street								
ſ	CITY OR TOWN: Providence								
	Rhode Island	CODE 44	COUNTY: Pro	vidence	007				
3. P	HOTO REFERENCE ,								
5	PHOTO CREDIT: Alice R. Hauck								
-	DATE OF PHOTO: March, 1971								
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	Detail of iron structure an	d ornamen	t on ea	st façade.					



	Form 10-301 (July 1969)	UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF T NATIONAL PARK SERVIC		OR	Rhode Island			
		NATIONAL REGISTER OF HIST	ACES	Providence				
		PROPERTY MAP FOR		FOR NPS USE ONLY				
s		(Type all entries - attach to or enc	lose with	map)	ENTRY NUMBER	DATE		
z [1. NAME					1		
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-	AND/OR	HISTORIC:						
⊢ [2. LOCATIO	IN						
ບົ	STREET	AND NUMBER: 100 North Main Street						
RU	CITY OR	Providence						
L S	STATE:	Rhode Island	CODE 44	COUNTY: Pro	ovidence	CODE 007		
	3. MAP REF	ERENCE						
_	SOURCE:	U. S. Geological Survey						
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