

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Providence Telephone Company Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 112 Union Street

N.A. not for publication

city, town Providence

N.A. vicinity of

#2 - Hon. Claudine Schneider
~~Congressional district~~

state Rhode Island

code 44

county Providence

code 007

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N.A. In process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name 112 Union Street Associates

street & number c/o B.M. Redev, 37 Lewis Street

city, town Hartford

N.A. vicinity of

state Connecticut 06103

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Recorder of Deeds, City Hall

street & number 25 Dorrance Street

city, town Providence

state Rhode Island 02903

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Downtown Providence

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1980

federal state county local

depository for survey records Rhode Island Historical Preservation Commission
150 Benefit Street

city, town Providence

state Rhode Island 02903

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Situated on a narrow street adjacent to structures of similar scale, the Providence Telephone Company Building stands in the middle of Providence's densely built central business district. The facade of this five-story, masonry and steel building is the only portion publicly visible, and, because of its mid-block location, the building visually is planar rather than spatial. The brick-and-terra-cotta facade is divided in A-b-A-b-A fashion into three major and two minor bays. As originally constructed in 1893, the building rose three stories from the street; in 1906, the two upper stories were added.

The first floor of the facade is of rusticated Indiana limestone. The base has three major tripartite entrance bays and two minor bays. The central entrance is flanked by Ionic columns; the two side entrances, by slender Corinthian columns--none is fluted. The minor bays, flanking the central entrance, have simple round-head openings. The whole first level is capped by a dentil cornice and a wide, flat frieze bearing the legend "TELEPHONE BUILDING."

The same bay system obtains on the second, third, and fourth stories. Windows in the major bays are grouped in threes or fours; those in minor bays are single. The surface of the second story is brick, but rusticated like the first story. A wide and elaborate frieze of grotesquework separates the second and third stories. Colossal Composite engaged columns set on pedestals with grotesque-ornamented dadoes and a full Composite entablature--its frieze ornamented with grotesquework--frame the third and fourth stories, whose brick wall surface is banded with bead-and-reel molding; cartouches cap the windows of the minor bays.

The fifth floor is more simply handled. A blind balustrade caps the Composite cornice. The three major bays have two sash windows each, and the two minor bays have a single window each. Grotesquework pilasters define the bays. A simple parapet caps the building, broken only by segmental arches over the minor bays.

Interior finish is simple. The first floor lobby, at the center of the building, features a marble floor, an open staircase with decorative iron rail, wood-paneled walls, and a structural column finished as an Ionic column, supporting a steel beam sheathed as a full entablature. Much of the original flooring and many of the ceiling cornices and Corinthian column capitals were sheathed during the renovation of the structure in the 1960s, but these have been revealed and restored in a recent rehabilitation. On the second floor, a fireplace mantel in the northeast section of the building features fluted Corinthian columns supporting a carved frieze and modillioned shelf.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below					
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)		

Specific dates 1893, 1906 **Builder/Architect** Stone, Carpenter & Willson, Architects, of Providence

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Providence Telephone Company Building is a well-preserved turn-of-the-century office building, significant historically as a symbol of the early prosperity and remarkable expansion of the Providence Telephone Company and architecturally as an early and important commercial example in the late nineteenth-century classicizing mode.

The Providence Telephone Company was organized and incorporated in 1880 under the leadership of former Governor Henry Howard, who served as president until 1892. That same year, the City of Providence granted the company a franchise for an underground conduit system, and the subsequent rapid increase in the number of subscribers necessitated new switchboard facilities. The Telephone Company applied for an Intention-to-Build Permit on 28 June 1892, and construction on this building continued into 1893. Upon completion, the three-story building provided a telephone station in the lobby--with booths fitted for both long-distance and local use--offices for the directors on the second floor, and operating rooms on the third floor. The company grew rapidly, and the building was expanded vertically to five floors to accommodate the expanded service. Within ten years, however, the building was again cramped and unable to expand further in this location; consequently, the company moved to headquarters in a new building at 234 Washington Street in 1917.

Designed by Stone, Carpenter & Willson, the leading Providence architectural firm at the time, the Telephone Company Building is an important building in the transition from the somewhat fussy, "eclectic" buildings of the 1880s to the smooth classicism of the 1890s and after. This is the first of a long series of commercial buildings based on Renaissance-inspired examples. The firm's first shift toward a refined, intricately ornamented Renaissance classicism was informed by the New York work of McKim, Mead & White--particularly their Century Association (1891) or Judson Memorial Church (1892)--and particularly the rather flamboyant designs of Stanford White executed in terra-cotta. Both the rhythm of the facade's bay system and the highly manipulated surface recall the embellished, mid-sixteenth-century architecture of Northern Italy--and particularly the Veneto--that provided ultimate inspiration for much of the work of both McKim, Mead & White and Stone, Carpenter & Willson during the 1890s. The building was well received upon its completion, and an illustration was published in the American Architect and Building News on 16 September 1893. Immediate successors stylistically to the Telephone Company Building include the Lauderdale and Francis Buildings (1894),

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Continuation sheet 1

Item number 8

Page 2

Old Stone Bank (1898), and the Providence Public Library (1900), all by Stone, Carpenter & Willson. The addition of the top two stories in 1906 involved a considerable reworking of the 1893 design, but the final solution is consistent within itself.

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Continuation sheet 2

Item number 9

Page 2

Jordy, William H., and Monkhouse, Christopher P. Buildings on Paper:
Rhode Island Architectural Drawings 1825-1945. Providence, 1982.

Providence Board of Trade Journal and Supplement. V. 29, no. 12,
December, 1917:688.

9. Major Bibliographical References

American Architect and Building News. September 16, 1893.

Hall, Joseph D. Jr., Editor. Biographical History of the Manufacturers and Business Men of Rhode Island. Providence, 1901.

10. Geographical Data

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

Acreage of nominated property less than one acre.

Quadrangle name Providence, R.I.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	9	2	9	9	4	4	1	0	4	6	3	2	6	2	1	0
Zone			Easting						Northing							

B

Zone			Easting						Northing							

C

Zone			Easting						Northing							

D

Zone			Easting						Northing							

E

Zone			Easting						Northing							

F

Zone			Easting						Northing							

G

Zone			Easting						Northing							

H

Zone			Easting						Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

As recorded in Deed Book 1164 1106, Plat Book 35 32, and Plat Card No. 1065. The building fills its lot and has since its construction.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N.A. code county code

state N.A. code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jack A. Gold, Historic Preservation Consultant

organization N.A. date March, 1982

street & number 862 Orange Street telephone 203-776-2420

city or town New Haven state Connecticut 06511

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature [Signature]

title _____ date 24 June 1983

For NPS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
_____	date _____
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest: _____	date _____
Chief of Registration	



PROVIDENCE TELEPHONE COMPANY BUILDING
112 Union Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Photographer: Joseph King
Date: May, 1983
Negative filed at: Joseph King
57 Eddy Street
Providence, RI 02903

View: Union Street facade.

Photo #1



PROVIDENCE TELEPHONE COMPANY BUILDING
112 Union Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Photographer: Joseph King
Date: May, 1983
Negative filed at: Joseph King
57 Eddy Street
Providence, RI 02903

View: Upper floors, Union Street facade.

Photo #2



PROVIDENCE TELEPHONE COMPANY BUILDING
112 Union Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Photographer: Joseph King

Date: May, 1983

Negative filed at: Joseph King
57 Eddy Street
Providence, RI 02903

View: Main entrance, Union Street facade.

Photo #3



PROVIDENCE TELEPHONE COMPANY BUILDING
112 Union Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Photographer: Joseph King
Date: May, 1983
Negative filed at: Joseph King
57 Eddy Street
Providence, RI 02903

View: Main entrance foyer.

Photo #4



PROVIDENCE TELEPHONE COMPANY BUILDING
112 Union Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Photographer: Joseph King

Date: May, 1983

Negative filed at: Joseph King
57 Eddy Street
Providence, RI 02903

View: Stair, entrance foyer.

Photo #5



PROVIDENCE TELEPHONE COMPANY BUILDING
112 Union Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Photographer: Joseph King

Date: May, 1983

Negative filed at: Joseph King
57 Eddy Street
Providence, RI 02903

View: Detail, capital, main entrance.

Photo #6



PROVIDENCE TELEPHONE COMPANY BUILDING
112 Union Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Photographer: Joseph King

Date: May, 1983

Negative filed at: Joseph King
57 Eddy Street
Providence, RI 02903

View: Second floor offices.

Photo #7



PROVIDENCE TELEPHONE COMPANY BUILDING
112 Union Street
Providence, Rhode Island 02903

Photographer: Joseph King

Date: May, 1983

Negative filed at: Joseph King
57 Eddy Street
Providence, RI 02903

View: Second floor offices.

Photo #8



Providence Telephone Company
Building
112 Union Street
Providence, R.I.

A 19 299440 4632620