

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name: Westerly Armory

other name/site number: _____

2. Location

street & number: (no number) Railroad Avenue

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Westerly vicinity: N/A

state: RI county: Washington code: 009 zip code: 02891

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: public

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Property name Westerly Armory, Washington County, Westerly, 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.

Thomas K. Williamson
Signature of certifying official

9/30/96
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:

<u> </u>	entered in the National Register	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u> See continuation sheet.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	determined eligible for the National Register	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u> See continuation sheet.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	determined not eligible for the National Register	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	removed from the National Register	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	other (explain): <u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Signature of Keeper		Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic:	<u>DEFENSE</u>	Sub:	<u>Arms Storage</u>
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>
Current:	<u>VACANT</u>	Sub:	<u> </u>
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>
	<u> </u>		<u> </u>

Property name Westerly Armory, Washington County, Westerly, RI

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque

Other Description: _____

Materials: foundation STONE/granite roof STONE/slate
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: State

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE

Period(s) of Significance: 1901-02

Significant Dates: 1901-02

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: A Walker, William R., & Son
B Walsh, J.C., Company

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

X See continuation sheet.

Property name Westerly Armory, Washington County, Westerly, 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
- 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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: less than 1 acre

UTM References:			Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	<u>19</u>	<u>263540</u>	<u>4584800</u>	B	_____	_____	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	D	_____	_____	_____	_____

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Pamela A. Kennedy, Supervising Historic Preservation Specialist

Organization: R.I. Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission Date: June 1996

Street & Number: 150 Benefit Street Telephone: 401-277-2678

City or Town: Providence State: RI ZIP: 02903

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Description

The Westerly Armory (1901-1902; William R. Walker & Son, architects) is a large, heavily-scaled, brick building, built in the Romanesque style. It comprises two sections, a front office block and a large drill shed to the rear. The armory faces Railroad Avenue, just north of downtown Westerly, a small urban commercial center. To the west is a residential neighborhood of houses dating from the early and mid-20th century. The armory overlooks the tracks of the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad as it passes into downtown Westerly. The building is oriented diagonally, northwest-southeast, on its small lot. An 8-inch rifle is mounted on the front lawn.

The armory's front block is two stories high and three bays wide, and is set on a high basement whose slightly battered walls are rough ashlar of a distinctive pink granite quarried in nearby Pawcatuck, Connecticut. There is a projecting three-stage square tower at the center of the facade. The central entrance is in the base of the tower and is set into a massive round arch with heavy granite voussoirs. The windows are deeply recessed into the brick walls and on the facade are arranged in sets of three. On the first floor (and on the second stage of the tower), the triple windows are flat-headed and trimmed in roughly-cut granite. On the second floor (and the third stage of the tower) the windows are set under round-head arches and separated by short columns. Polygonal turrets with arrow slits are built on the two upper front corners and are supported on corbels. The cornice, originally battlemented, is now marked only with a plain copper gravelstop.

The drill shed, set directly behind the office section, is a single level, hip-roofed block, built of red brick on a brick foundation. Its flat walls are divided by piers worked in the brick. The fenestration consists of simple rectangular windows with granite lintels and sills set in bands of three, high in the wall. Each face of the slate roof has one or two small hip-roofed dormers.

On the interior, the front block is arranged around a wide central hall which runs from the entrance in the tower back to the drill shed. Large offices open off either side of the hall. On the left are two office rooms, for a commanding officer and his second. On the right is a single large room, known as the sitting room. A broad double-run stairway, with a heavy newel post and turned balusters, is at the rear of the block. The second floor of the office block repeats the plan of the first floor. The interior finishes are simple. In the hall, varnished matched board siding

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with a heavy molding on its upper edge lines the lower section of the plastered walls. The large office rooms are simply plastered. The floors are painted wood, probably pine, covered in some areas with linoleum. The sitting room has a simple fireplace, with a massive round arch worked in red brick.

The interior of the drill shed is a large unobstructed space, open to the roof. Steel trusses support the roof, and a small reviewing stand projects into the space from the second floor hall of the office block. The walls are brick; the floor is unpainted maple. Wall and ceiling surfaces are all painted white and green.

The basement level contains utility rooms and a large vault.

Photographs

3. Photographer: Pamela Kennedy

4. Date: August, 1996

5. Negative: RIHP&HC

Above information applies to all photographs.

6. View: Exterior of armory, seen from southwest; office block at right, drill shed at left (rear)

7. Photo #1

6. View: Hallway and stair, door to drill shed (from northwest)

7. Photo #2

6. View: Fireplace, right front office (from southwest)

7. Photo #3

6. View: Drill shed, balcony and door to hall at left (from northeast)

7. Photo #4

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Significance

The Westerly Armory is architecturally significant as a well preserved local example of a building type and as the work of a prolific Rhode Island firm, William R. Walker & Son, known principally for public buildings.

The Westerly Armory is the second to serve the communities of Rhode Island's southwestern corner. The first armory was located on Main Street in Westerly and was home to a state militia unit, the Westerly Rifles, which had been chartered in 1855, and later to several infantry companies. A wood frame building constructed in 1860, the Main Street Armory burned in April 1889.

Construction on the present armory was begun in 1901 and completed the following year. The armory originally housed Company E of the 1st Infantry Regiment of the Rhode Island National Guard and later various coast artillery units. National Guard units from the Westerly Armory were activated into federal service in 1917 and 1940. Until recently the armory was home to the 169th Military Police Company of the state's National Guard. It is now leased to a citizens' group, working for its preservation.

Since its construction, the Westerly Armory has served as a civic center for its town as well as a military center. For many years, the armory drill shed was the largest available indoor space in the town and the site of its shows, exhibitions, fairs, and athletics. Boxing matches and local basketball leagues used the drill shed; the basement for many years housed a bowling lane and a rifle range used by the local rifle club. Auto shows and antique shows were held here from the 1920s into the 1960s. Scout troops and health clinics regularly used the armory. For several generations this was a polling place. The drill shed was often used for weddings, lodge dances, and the like. Until the mid-1950s the armory was the site of Westerly's regionally famous annual poultry show, when hundreds of chickens (and their owners) from all over southern Rhode Island competed for ribbons.

Rhode Island built six major armories between 1894 and 1913. Responding to increasing professionalization of the militia, reviving after its ebb following the Civil War; to increased interest from local militias and their national voice, the National Guard Association; and to increasing federal aid in arms, equipment, and money to local companies, Rhode Island entered on a major building program for armories. As in other states, the construction of an armory was also an important public work, designed to

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employ workers, boost the local economy, and return the sponsors to public office; as one historian of the militia has noted of this period, "What rivers and harbors were to Congress...armories became to many state legislatures" (Riker, p. 60). In Rhode Island, the legislative largesse extended to the use of armories; citizens who wished to use an armory for a social or athletic purpose petitioned their local representative who, in turn, sponsored a legislative resolution granting the use of the hall.

The designer of the Westerly Armory, William R. Walker & Son, was one of the most active and prolific architectural firms in late 19th- and early 20th-century Rhode Island. William R. Walker (1830-1905) began architectural practice after the Civil War and was followed by his son William H. Walker (1856-1922) and his grandson William R. Walker II (1884-1936). William R. had fought in the Civil War, and he and William H. were both active in the state militia, each rising in turn to the rank of general. Politically well connected, the Walker firm specialized in public buildings: armories, schools, libraries, theaters, courthouses, and town and city halls.

Five of the six armories built in the turn-of-the-century decades were designed by William R. Walker and Son. Beginning with the Pawtucket Armory (1894-95, NR), continuing with the Westerly Armory (1901), the Cranston Street Armory in Providence (1903-07, NR), the Woonsocket Armory (1912), the Kentish Artillery Armory in Warwick (1912, NR), to the Armory of Mounted Commands in Providence (1913), each commission in turn was given to the Walker firm. Though varied in size and design, they all draw on elements of medieval castles--towers, turrets, battlements--thought appropriate for buildings which housed military units. The Westerly Armory is a well-preserved example of this aspect of the Walker firm's work.

The Westerly Armory is here nominated for its architectural quality and for its demonstrable ability to document and represent the quality and character of the state's turn-of-the-century armories. The Westerly Armory may also have significance in the military history of Rhode Island, not investigated here. Future studies of the history of the state's militias will no doubt reveal additional significance for the armory.

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Major Bibliographical References

"Armories," Report of the Rhode Island Adjutant General. Annual Report...for the Year 1922-1928. Snow & Farnham, Providence.

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

Providence Journal. "The Armories," August 9, 1924, p. 12.

Rhode Island General Assembly. Acts and Resolves, 1901-1937.

Riker, William H. Soldiers of the States: The Role of the National Guard in American Democracy. North Stratford, 1980.

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Geographical Data

The boundary of the Westerly Armory is the bound of lot 60, shown on Westerly Assessor's plat 57. This represents the extent of the land area historically associated with the armory.



Westerly Armory
Washington County
Westerly, R.I.

Photo # 1 of 4



Westerly Armory
Washington County
Westerly, R.I.

Photo # 2 of 4



Westerly Armory

Washington County

Westerly, R.I.

Photo #3 of 4



Westerly Armory
Washington County
Westerly, R.I.

Photo # 4 of 4

#1

Removed for
Images of RI

PK 3Feb99

Westerly Armory
 Washington County
 Westerly, R.I.

19-263540-4584800

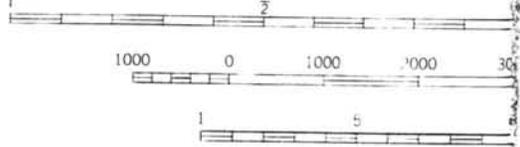
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MAGNETIC NORTH
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THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATION
 FOR SALE BY U. S. GOVERNMENT
 DENVER, COLORADO 80225,
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS