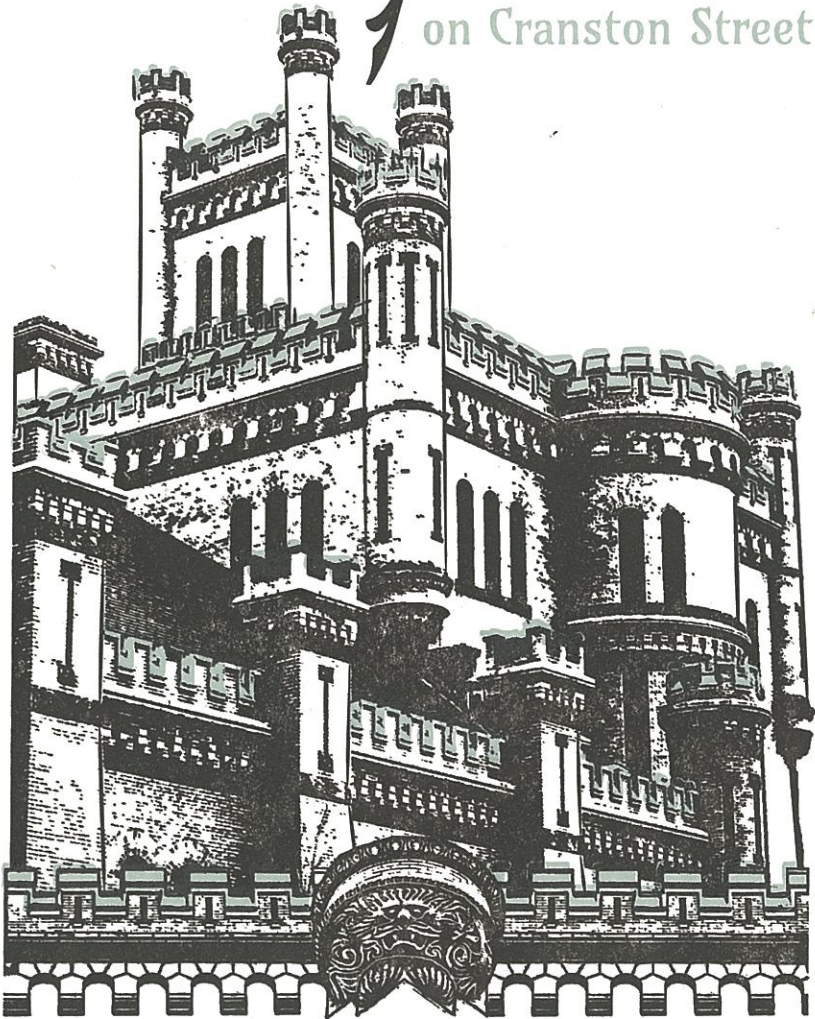


# The Providence Armory

on Cranston Street



MONUMENTS  
OF  
PROVIDENCE  
BOOK I

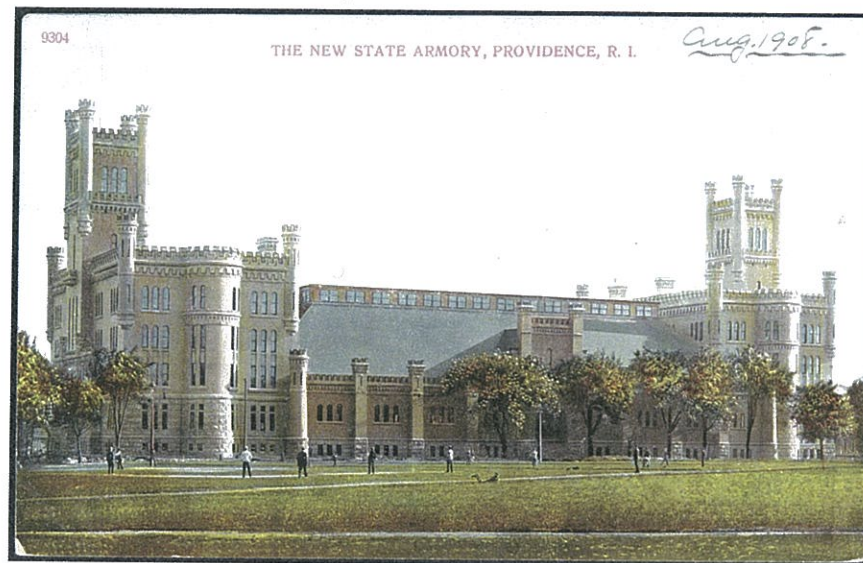
A SERIES DEDICATED TO EXCAVATING  
THE STORIES OF PROVIDENCE'S HISTORIC PLACES.

by Taylor M. Polites

# The Providence Armory

MONUMENTS  
OF  
PROVIDENCE  
BOOK I

on Cranston Street



FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE PROVIDENCE PUBLIC LIBRARY

## A Collation of Historical Moments Pertaining to the Life of One of Rhode Island's Great Historical Monuments

AND SOURCED FROM THE VARIED RESOURCES OF  
THE VARIED CITY OF PROVIDENCE

BY  
TAYLOR M. POLITES

## INTRODUCTION

The imposing bulk of the fortress-like Providence Armory on Cranston Street sits at the heart of Providence's West End, anchoring a community of late 19th and early 20th century buildings that are as significant to the city's history as the East Side's storied streets. Living in the shadow of this great, hulking structure, one cannot help but be curious about its life. Why was it built—and why here? What was its purpose, and what other uses did it serve? By investigating and understanding the past uses of this magnificent structure, I hope to contribute to the conversation about its future.

Armories and a standing militia have been a part of the American urban landscape since the colonial era. As Robert Fogelson details in his book *America's Armories*, a renewed urgency spurred the construction of armory buildings in dense, urban centers in the late 19th century. Rapid industrialization, propelled by the Civil War, met a series of economic convulsions that resulted in significant labor unrest. Fogelson cites the railroad strike of 1877, the Chicago Haymarket massacre of 1886, and the Homestead strike of 1892, which led to pitched battles between well-armed strikers and Pinkerton Security agents. The construction of new, modern armories for volunteer militias calmed the anxieties of urban dwellers about social order, in addition to swelling the civic ambitions of city boosters and the volunteer military companies who occupied these grand and authoritarian buildings.

I have selected and edited a variety of source documents in the hope of providing a window into the history of this building not only as a political and military symbol, but also as a critical civic space where tens of thousands of city residents came together over the course of a century.



*Aerial view of the Armory, c. 1957. Courtesy of the Rhode Island State Archives*

## ACTS AND RESOLVES PASSED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF RHODE ISLAND AND PROVIDENCE PLANTATIONS AT THE MAY SESSION, 1894.

No. 25. Passed June 12, 1894.

RESOLUTION appointing a joint special committee of the general assembly to confer with the city council of the city of Providence with a view of obtaining from said city a suitable location upon which to erect a state armory, to be occupied when completed by such companies of the Brigade R.I. Militia as now are, or may be hereafter, located within the limits of said city.

*Resolved*, That His Excellency D. Russell Brown, Governor, Messrs. Heydon, Wilson and Charles C. Gray of the house of representatives, and Messrs. Woods and Cranston of the senate, together with Brig. Gen. Elisha Dyer, Adjutant General, and Brig. Gen. Charles R. Dennis, Quartermaster General, be, and they are hereby, appointed a joint special committee of the general assembly to confer with the city council of the city of Providence with a view of obtaining from said city a suitable location upon which to erect a state armory, to be occupied when completed by such companies of the brigade Rhode Island militia as now are, or may be hereafter, located with the limits of said city.

## MINUTES OF THE MEETINGS OF THE JOINT SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON PROVIDENCE ARMORY

The committee met at the City Hall, Providence, on Wednesday, December 12th [1894] at 3:30pm, upon invitation of John E. Kendrick, chairman of the joint special committee of the city council relative to a site for a State Armory in the city of Providence...

Mr. Kendrick opened the discussion by suggesting as a site the land cornered by Park and Promenade Streets on the old state prison property.

Gen. Kendall asked the elevation of the land and on being informed that the State House site was about 40 ft. and the land corner of Park and Promenade street 9 ft., the city engineer said that it would be possible to construct a sub-cellar on the land and to make it watertight.

Gen. Kendall objected that the proposed site would not give the armory a commanding position, at least not such as a military man would occupy.

Gen. Dennis agreed with Gen. Kendall and thought it would be placing the armory right in a hole and at the mercy of a mob on the freight yards and Smith's hill, that might be armed with dynamite or hand grenades...

Representative Gray thought there would be much delay, and danger to the militia men in getting to an armory on that location, if the freight yards and depot were in the hands of a mob...



The Armory under construction. The text, written in 1906, reads: "I cross here every day."

From the *Providence Daily Journal*, November 5, 1905:

Out on Cranston street, one of the most conspicuous buildings in the city is now nearing completion. This is the State Armory, the builder of which is M.J. Houlihan and the architect W. Howard Walker of the firm of William R. Walker & Son. The great structure is of yellow brick and a reddish granite from Jonesboro, Me. It is the so-called "armory" style of architecture, a style that has grown up very largely in the last few years, and been adopted for the use of such buildings all over the country.

This armory style would technically be called Romanesque. That is, it has many Romanesque details, but the castellated towers are reminders of the feudal strongholds of the Middle Ages, and no attempt has been made to conform completely to any one classified sort of architecture.

June 9, 1907:

#### ROOMS ASSIGNED IN NEW ARMORY

*Commission Meets and Completes Several Details of the Occupancy of the Building.*

—Machine Gun Battery Makes Fine Showing.

The State Armory is being pushed ahead at a very rapid rate, and from present appearances will be ready for occupancy early in the coming fall. It is the intention to have the building ready in time for the resumption of drills in October, if possible, and the different com-

mands are making plans with that end in view. The exterior of the armory is very nearly completed, and a good idea can now be had of its beauty. While not so large as many armories in other States, in point of convenience and up-to-date arrangements it will be the equal of any in the country when completed. In arranging its interior details all the best points of the large buildings in Boston, New York and other cities have been adopted, the whole making a most complete building...

April 21, 1908:

#### THOUSANDS THROG NEW STATE ARMORY *Commodious National Guard Home Scene of Housewarming. Concert and Dance Given.*

The commodious new State armory on Cranston street was duly "opened" last evening, when several thousand persons of both sexes, comprising soldiers, statesmen and citizens, assembled there at the invitation of the Armory Commission for an inspection of the vast structure and a social evening with a promenade band concert and a dance as the principal features.

Four thousand invitations were issued for the affair, and as each invitation admitted a man and woman, it is estimated that more than 8000 persons visited the armory during the evening...

#### GOVERNOR ARRIVES

Official interest centered about Brigade Headquarters on the lower floor, convenient to Dexter street entrance, where the Governor and his staff were to meet the members of the Armory Commission. The Governor was late in arriving, but at 9:25 he reached the building and attended by Adjutant General Frederic M. Sackett, with others of the general staff, and his personal aides, met the members of the commission...

As the party, headed by the Governor, who was escorted by ex-Governor Brown, chairman of the Armory Commission, made its appearance in the balcony, the First Regiment Band, from its station in the center of the drill shed, struck up "Hail to the Chief," while the throng on the floor turned a sea of faces toward the point where the official party was seating itself...

A promenade concert from 8 to 10 was followed by dancing from 10 to 12, though the crowd was too large for comfort in this direction. During the latter part of the evening Governor Higgins attended by his Chief of Staff, Col. Tucker, descended from the balcony and mingled for a time with the gathering on the floor.

The armory, brilliant with thousands of incandescent lights and gayly decked with flags and emblems for the occasion, presented a festive appearance and the visitors were unanimous in their expressions of approval of the State's new military headquarters.



From the Providence Daily Journal, February 24, 1909. The Board of Trade "Boom" dinner. An assemblage of 2,500 Rhode Island businessmen. Photo by William Mills & Son.

February 7, 1909:

USE OF STATE ARMORY FOR BANQUET OPPOSED  
COMMISSION OBJECTS TO ALLOWING BUSINESS  
MEN'S DINNER THERE  
MAKES EMPHATIC PROTEST

*Board in Charge of National Guard Building Sends Letter to General Assembly Remonstrating Against Granting of Proposed Permission as Precedent Against Public Policy*

An emphatic protest against allowing the use of the new State Armory for the business men's banquet, designed to boom the city's trade, was formulated by the Providence Armory Commission at its regular meeting Friday night, and forwarded to the General Assembly by ex-Governor D. Russell Brown, chairman of the commission.

February 24, 1909:

BOOM FOR BIGGER, BUSIER CITY  
STARTED WITH CHEERS BY 2500

*Dinner Under Board of Trade Auspices Greatest in America*

"Providence provides!!"

Booming Providence began with that watchword last evening.

The biggest trade dinner ever held in America took the new slogan with a shout, and swept in the movement for push, progress and prosperity on the crest of a tide of ardor that dazzled the chief boomers and left sceptics without a word.

Twenty-five hundred business and professional men woke the echoes of the city's largest building and dedicated themselves to the civic duty of practical optimism. All the slumbering loyalty of the second city of New England was roused in a scene unrivalled in Rhode Island annals and declared itself wide awake and ready to go ahead..

And the scene it furnished is one not likely to fade from the memories of those who participated. For four hours music and speaking alternated in a hall that contained 225 tables, while before and after the huge throng was handled without a fault to mar the inspiration of the occasion...

The immensity of the hall, which had been concealed by the harmony of the decorations of blue and yellow bunting and flags, was promptly revealed at the first effort to make an individual voice heard by all. Nature having failed to keep pace with the progress of Providence by the installing of voices capable of carrying to 2500 people, megaphones were called into play, and through them the announcements were made.



"Photo of Troopers in Full Uniform of Old Providence Horse Guards."  
From the Providence Evening Bulletin, April 11, 1909.

April 10, 1909:

#### NATIONAL LANCERS TROOP B'S GUESTS

*Boston Organization Comes to City in Attractive Uniforms*

#### MAKE PICTURESQUE PARADE

*Noteworthy Event in Local Military History, Marking Reorganization of Providence Troop of Cavalry—Banquet and Complimentary Review to Governor Pothier Features.*

With a parade in which the scarlet uniforms of the visitors attracted great attention from the crowds which lined the sidewalks and a dinner at which the best of good cheer prevailed, the Boston National Lancers cemented their friendship with Providence Troop of Cavalry, the civic designation of Troop B, State National Guard, yesterday afternoon and last evening...

#### PARADE STARTS

The Lancers arrived on schedule time a few minutes after 5 and were met with true military honors. After the ceremonies of reception had been exchanged the line was formed and, swinging across Exchange place, passed in review of Mayor Fletcher and members of the City Government at City Hall, thence down the south side of Exchange place, through Exchange street, up Westminster and through Parade street to the armory.

#### ARRIVE AT ARMORY

The line marched directly into the big armory and encircled the great drill hall before the commands were dismissed and dress uniforms temporarily laid aside. After half an hour of sociability the local troopers and guests marched to the banquet hall, where an excellent dinner was served. At each place a neat menu card afforded each diner a desirable souvenir of the occasion.

February 8, 1910:

#### ARMORY BASKETBALL GAMES

The schedule of the Armory Basketball League will be resumed this evening after an intermission of a week, four games being on the card. The Battery A leaders will tackle the Fourteenth Company. Troop C will play the Fifteenth Company, the Ninth Company will meet the first Company and the Seventh Company will take the floor against the Second Company.

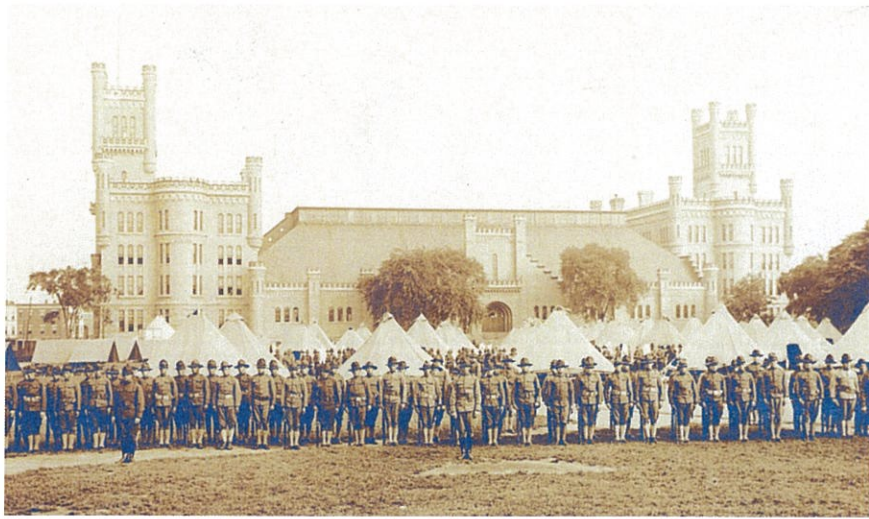
October 11, 1910:

#### SLOCUM GUARDS CELEBRATE

*Addressed by Major C.W. Abbot, at 56th Anniversary Exercises.*

...The members of the association and the men of the Seventh Company, Coast Artillery Corp., assembled at the rooms of the latter organization in the east headhouse of the new armory on Cranston street at 7:30 o'clock and until 8 an informal reception was held. A number of the former members of the Slocums were in attendance for the first time in several years, and old acquaintances were renewed and new ones formed with the younger members now in the ranks of the active organization. During the half-hour Eddy's Orchestra furnished music.

At the appointed hour the line was formed and headed by Capt. Archie Harden, with Lieutenant Governor Bliss, the company, numbering more than 100, proceeded to the supper room on the upper floor, where the anniversary dinner was served. As the men took their places at the tables, the veterans on the right of the head table and the militiamen on the left, Lieut. Joseph Stringer of Riverside, President of the Association, welcomed the assemblage and gave order to fall to. The head table was decorated with two large bouquets of dahlias, sent by Sergt. Joseph William of Riverside, who was unable to be present on account of illness.



Soldiers encamped and drilling on the Dexter Training Ground during World War I, 1917.  
Courtesy of the Rhode Island State Archives.

March 3, 1917:

#### PROTEST ENTERED BY C.A.C. OFFICERS

*Use of Armories for Civil Purposes Deprecated*

#### ASK OPPORTUNITY TO DRILL

*Letter to Governor Beeckman from Col. Charles F. Tillinghast, Accompanying Resolution, Declares that Exhibitions Impose Unwarranted Interference with Work.*

A resolution protesting against the use of armories in four cities and towns throughout the State "for purposes including dances, automobile and other exhibitions, charity balls and poultry shows," has been passed by 52 officers of the Coast Artillery Corps, R.I.N.G. and is now in the hands of Governor Beeckman.

April 25, 1919:

#### THOUSANDS CROWD TO BIG MOVIE BALL

*Presence of Film Stars Proves Powerful Magnet*

#### CARNIVAL SPIRIT PREVAILS

*Col. H. Anthony Dyer Introduces Popular Screen Artists, Including Dorothy Dalton, Olive Thomas and Eugene O'Brien  
—Great Hall is Beautifully Lighted*

If the inhabitants of Mars sent a delegation of green and purple-colored people to visit the earth, if the Kaiser were put in one of those red and gold circus cages and rolled down Broadway, if the peace conference with the original Paris cast were put on some popular vaudeville circuit, they wouldn't stimulate one-quarter of the curiosity produced

by a handful of movie royalty exposed to the gaze of the proletariat.

Anyone who went to the Movie Ball at the State Armory last night will unhesitatingly second the motion. To dispose first of the necessary facts—there must have been seven or eight thousand people at the ball, which was given by the movie operators' local for the benefit of the Fatherless Children of France Fund and the Moving Picture Operators' sick benefit fund...

#### BEG TO SEE STARS

Grown women begged to be hoisted aloft, just to catch a glimpse. And lots of them were, or said they were, disappointed. "Oh, she's not half as pretty as I thought she was!" But that was the occasional woman of it. Mere men were completely under their spell.

People climbed over one another to get up on the platform where royalty was standing. When Olive Thomas danced with Mr. Fowler, they were followed by a serpentine crowd that had to be preceded by a policeman...

...The lighting arrangements for the ball were elaborate. Powerful yellow and blue and green electric lights played over the armory with pleasing effect. Scores of balloons came down from nowhere and provided amusement for a time. Snow fell—confetti snow, while the orchestra played "Jingle Bells." It was a great big, wide night.

May 7, 1922:

#### RHODES AND ARMORY

To the Editor of the Sunday Journal:

Will you settle the following controversy through the columns of the Sunday Journal?

"A" states that the dance floor at Rhodes could be placed in the drill hall of the State Armory three times with room to spare. This statement is disputed by "B." E.J.H.

Providence

(The floor of the dance hall at Rhodes measures 75x150 feet. The floor space of the drill hall in the State Armory is 167x235 feet. The area of the drill hall is three times the area of the dance floor at Rhodes with 4595 square feet to spare.—Ed.)



Olive Thomas on a program for Ziegfeld's racy "Midnight Frolic," c. 1916. Within 18 months of her appearance at the Armory, Thomas would die in an apparent suicide scandal. Wikimedia Commons.

A program from a music festival from the Rhode Island Historical Society:

MUSIC WEEK  
RHODE ISLAND MUSIC FESTIVAL

under the auspices of the  
Music Supervisors' Association  
State Armory, Cranston Street  
Saturday, May 7, 1927, 2 p.m.

Program

1. Song--*America the Beautiful*.....Ward  
All State Chorus, Elmer S. Hosmer, Conductor
2. Selections--a. *Forward March*.....Ascher  
b. *Soft, Soft, Music is Stealing*.....Ascher  
Laurel Hill Grammar School Band, Grace Meserve, Conductor
3. Song--*On Parade*.....Loomis  
Samuel Slater Junior High School Glee Club  
Marion O'Brien, Conductor
4. Song--*A Warrior Bold*.....Adams  
Boys' Glee Club, Warwick, Minerva Hill, Conductor...

From the *Providence Journal*, December 27, 1931:

WILL FLOODLIGHT FRONT OF ARMORY  
*Auto Show Committee Plans Brilliant Illumination  
Battery of High-Powered Lamps to Be Used for First Time  
on Dexter Street Front of Building*

—*Elaborate Decorative Scheme Designed for Exhibition Hall.*

The Cranston Street Armory is to be flood lighted for the first time during the Providence Automobile Show, to be held by the Rhode Island Automobile Dealers Association during the week beginning Saturday, Jan. 16. The lights will be placed on the Dexter street front of the building, the brilliant illumination extending to the top of the tower.

Eight lights of 1000-watt capacity and four 500-watt lights will be used according to a plan worked out by the Electrical League of Rhode Island. The front of the building will thus be visible from a long distance for the armory stands on high ground and may easily be seen from the upper floors of some of the downtown office buildings. Standing out in this glow of light will be a big electrical sign reading "Auto Show." Another electric sign will be displayed on the Cranston street corner of the building front.



*The floodlit Armory from the Dexter Street entrance for the "Auto Show," January 16, 1932.  
Courtesy of the Rhode Island Historical Society.*

CANOPY TO HIDE CEILING

Inside the building, a new decorative scheme will be used starting at the entrance and extending through the big drill shed. The ceiling of the main hall, where the cars of 1932 are to be assembled for the first time in New England, will be covered with a canopy of alternating streamers of cerulean blue and American beauty, fringed with gold. The roof beams will be entirely hidden, the canopy extending from end to end of the drill hall.

Hanging from this canopy will be nine large ornamental chandeliers of 1500-watt capacity each, flooding the exhibition space with light. The side walls will be hidden with long strips of heliotrope and violet



for added contrast to the dark colors of the cars—for this year the bright hues of previous seasons will be lacking in many of the higher-priced automobiles and bodies will return to the black, dark blue and dark maroon of earlier years.

The floor covering of the main hall will be a specially made material designed to give good footing and to set off the cars by contrast.

January 31, 1935:

#### 4000 PERSONS JAM ARMORY IN TRIBUTE TO ROOSEVELT

*Brilliant Assemblages Mark President's Birthday in Providence, Pawtucket, Woonsocket and Newport;  
Governor Honors Guests at Two Affairs*

A colorful assemblage estimated to number more than 4000 persons filled the drill shed of the Cranston Street Armory last evening for the annual Roosevelt Ball, held in observance of the birthday of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and to raise funds for the treatment of infantile paralysis victims in the State and nation.

Preceded by a concert by combined National Guard bands, the ball was featured by the grand march, led by Governor Theodore Francis Green and Miss Marie E. Lamond, and by an entertainment provided by vaudeville troupes from downtown theaters. General dancing continued until 1 a.m.

...Decorations were in the national colors. At the back of the bandstand a large picture of President Roosevelt formed the centre of the decorative background. During the receipt of the Washington broadcast and the President's address a spotlight was playing upon the picture.

May 1, 1949:

#### 3000 TURN OUT TO HEAR BARBER SHOP QUARTET SINGING AT ARMORY

By Ruth Tripp

Three thousand persons went to Cranston Street Armory last night to hear "those minor chords, and good close harmony." The Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America, Inc., held its Northeastern regional preliminary quartet contest with the Providence chapter as the host to the visitors who came from all the New England States, New Brunswick, and eastern New York.

Fifteen quartets competed and the qualifying quartets which will go in June to compete in an international contest at Buffalo are, the "Maple Sugar Four" from Burlington, Vt., "The Chord Scramblers"

from Derby, Conn., and "The Four Naturals" from New Haven. The alternate quartet is the "Jolly Whalers" from New Bedford.

... A feature of the evening was the singing of "The Balladaires" of Jersey City, one of the few lady barber shop quartets. They certainly did a smooth job on the "Beautiful Isle of Make Believe." Even with such fine singing, they are not eligible for membership because the society is strictly masculine.



From the Providence Journal of May 1, 1949: "Tuning Up at last night's quartet competition in the Cranston Street Armory are a ladies' quartet from Jersey City and the star male foursome of the Providence Chapter of the Society for the Preservation and Encouragement of Barber Shop Quartet Singing in America."

April 29, 1963:

#### 13,600 GIVEN VACCINE AT POLIO CLINIC

The final "mop-up" clinic for Type II anti-polio vaccine drew about 13,600 persons yesterday to the Cranston Street Armory, raising the total for the second phase of the End Polio Campaign to 635,617 persons immunized.

This is about 75 per cent of the state's population, compared with nearly 80 per cent, or 678,811 persons, who were immunized with Type I vaccine in March.

...In the cavernous drill hall of the armory, persons filed through the lines in steady streams when the doors opened at 10 a.m., and continued until they closed at 6 p.m. Officials estimated that it took each about 90 seconds to register, pick up the paper cup containing a piece of sugar injected with oral vaccine, chew it and walk out the door.



*Governor John Chafee and Virginia Coates Chafee with a member of the Rhode Island National Guard during the Grand March of Chafee's second inaugural, January 5, 1965, Rhode Island State Archives.*

February 6, 1964:

#### 5,300 ATTEND OPENING DAY OF FIRST STATE FLOWER SHOW

Opening day of the first Rhode Island State Flower show yesterday drew 5,300 persons to the Cranston Street Armory.

Albert Appelman, general manager for the show, said he was "very satisfied" with the crowd that attended the event from 4 p.m. to 10 p.m. It will resume at 1 p.m. today and remain open until 10 p.m. The show will continue through Sunday, operating from 1 p.m. to 10 p.m. each day.

Mr. Appelman said he expects the show to attract a paid crowd of \$50,000 by the end of the week.

Prizes were awarded in three divisions. In the landscaping division, first prizes went to the New England garden grist mill created jointly by the state Department of Agriculture and Conservation and the University of Rhode Island co-operative extension service; the Japanese garden built by the Providence Department of Parks; the Spanish garden of the R.I. Nurserymen's Association; the Hawaiian garden of John Tsitouris, and the United Nations garden of the URI department of horticulture.

January 6, 1965:

#### 2,000 ATTEND INAUGURAL BALL, STATE MILITIA UNITS PARADE

More than 2,000 people last night attended the Inaugural Ball at the Cranston Street Armory where the marching of old soldiers and young statesmen gave the evening an air of history.

Units of the State Militia, dressed in military uniforms that went back as far as 1825, formed in the center of the large gymnasium and then marched in review past Governor Chafee and other dignitaries in the box seats.

As the Newport Artillery paraded by, Sergeants James Brady and Jerry Morrison, both of Newport, raised their flintlock muskets and fired charges of Revolutionary War black powder into the air.

The blasts surprised most of the people in the crowd who were not used to watching the drills and ceremonies of the militia in their tassels and braid, sashes, swords and red, white and blue uniforms of the last century.

But Governor Chafee and Maj. Gen. Leonard Holland, state adjutant general, who suffered minor powder burns, hardly flinched as the gun powder exploded only a few feet away from them.

Later, Governor and Mrs. Chafee, General Holland and Mrs. Christopher Del Sesto, Lt. Gov. and Mrs. Giovanni Folcarelli, Mayor and Mrs. Joseph A. Doorley Jr. of Providence, Mayor and Mrs. James DiPrete Jr. of Cranston and other figures of state, their wives and guests, and members of the Governor's family participated in the Grand March that is the traditional highlight of the ball.

Former Governor Del Sesto attended the ball with Mrs. Del Sesto but sat out the Grand March.

...The governor wore a white tie and tails with a white carnation in his left lapel. Mrs. Chafee wore a fuchsia floor-length gown with a lightly-sequined bodice, elbow-length white gloves and silver slippers. Five of their six youngsters attended the festivities with them.

John Carty was the master of ceremonies. The 88th Army Band provided most of the martial music, and Ralph Stewart and his band played the dance music against a white and gold backdrop.

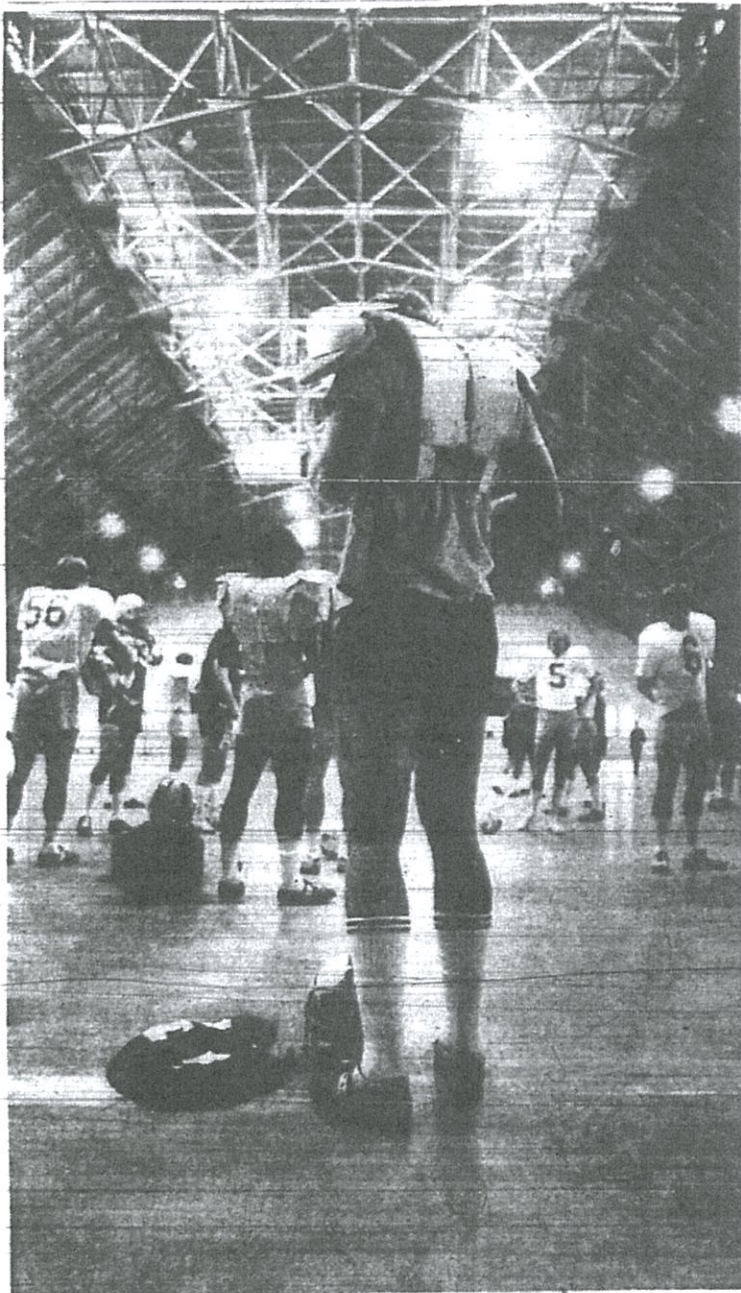
August 16, 1973:

#### ARMORY RESCUES PAT'S PRACTICE

by Bill Parrillo

In their often zany 14-year history, the Patriots have staged practices at some strange places—from a playground in Belmont, Mass., to a field at the entrance of an airport.

But yesterday, the Pats made some real history—they became the first pro-football team ever to hold a workout at the Cranston Street



**Drill in Drill Shed:** Weather yesterday forced Patriots indoors and they practiced at Cranston Street Armory scene of many major sports events since 1905.  
—Journal-Bulletin Photo by WILLIAM K. DABY

*The Patriots practice in the Providence Armory, August 15, 1973.*

Armory, a drill shed used by the R.I. National Guard.

"It worked out real good," enthused Chuck Fairbanks, the Pats' coach. "It saved us from missing a day. We did just about everything we wanted to do."

Because of yesterday's torrential rains, the Pats were seeking a place that afforded some secure footing. They didn't want to chew up the grass at King Philip High School in Wrentham and the polyturf at Schaefer Stadium still was littered with the debris from a rock concert held there.

So, Fairbanks was faced with the prospect of no practice.

However, it seems a cook at the Holiday Inn in South Attleboro, where the Pats are quartered this week, heard of their plight. He suggested the 68-year-old armory. A telephone call was made and that was it.

"Hell, the place is 85 yards long and 55 yards wide," explained Fairbanks. "Obviously, we couldn't do any hitting (wooden floor) but we were able to handle the mental aspects of the workout. We ran off all our plays."

January 22, 1981:

#### ARMORY IS CLOSED TO CIVILIAN GROUPS DUE TO FIRE CODE

By Irene Wielawski, Journal-Bulletin Staff Writer

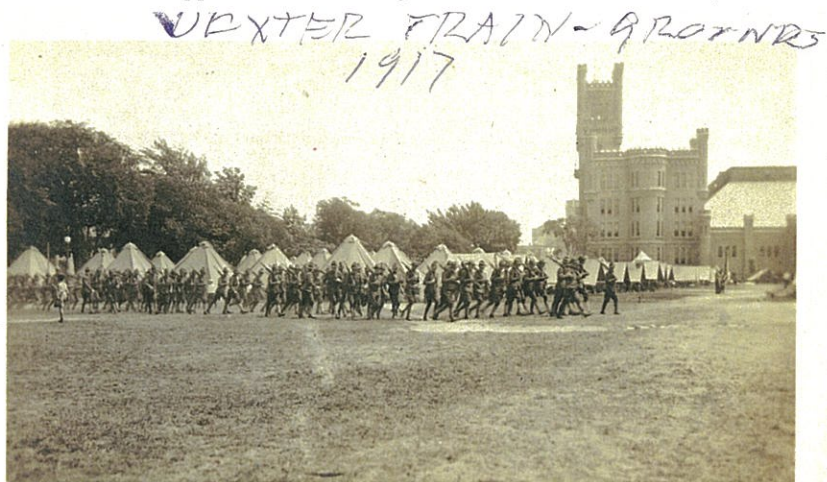
Providence—The Rhode Island National Guard has made the Cranston Street Armory off-limits to civilian organizations that for years have gathered there because the 72-year-old building has been found deficient in meeting several requirements of the state fire safety code.

Chief Deputy Fire Marshal Donald F. Walsh recommended last week that the building not be used by the public until problems with exits in the four-story stone building are corrected...

Among the organizations that will have to seek new quarters is the Rhode Island Interscholastic League, which has used the armory's first floor gymnasium for indoor track meets... The Rev. Robert C. Newbold, league executive secretary, said last night that he had not yet received Holland's letter but had heard rumors that the armory might be out as the state headquarters for high school indoor track competition, a distinction it has held for nearly 40 years.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This booklet was first created as an issue of the Occasional Nuggets series produced by the Providence Public Library Special Collections. I want to express my deepest thanks to Jordan Goffin, Special Collections Librarian at the PPL, for the inspiration and resources that led to the creation of this edition, dedicated to sharing the fascinating history of the epic Providence Armory. Proceeds from the sale of this book are dedicated to a fund managed by the West Broadway Neighborhood Association to support the rehabilitation efforts that will hopefully lead to the people of Providence once again being welcome in the "People's Castle." Sincere thanks to Kari Lang, longtime director of the WBNA, for her support of this work and her dedication to reanimating and restoring this important monument. Thanks also to Kate Wells of the Rhode Island Room of the Providence Public Library, the staff of the State Library and State Archives, with particular thanks to Tracey L. Croce and Ken Carlson, the Archives of the City of Providence, with special thanks to Caleb Horton, the Historical Services Office of the Rhode Island Army National Guard, with thanks to Sgt. James Loffler, the Providence Preservation Society, and the Rhode Island Historical Society. My thanks to all those who share an appreciation for this significant structure and its history.

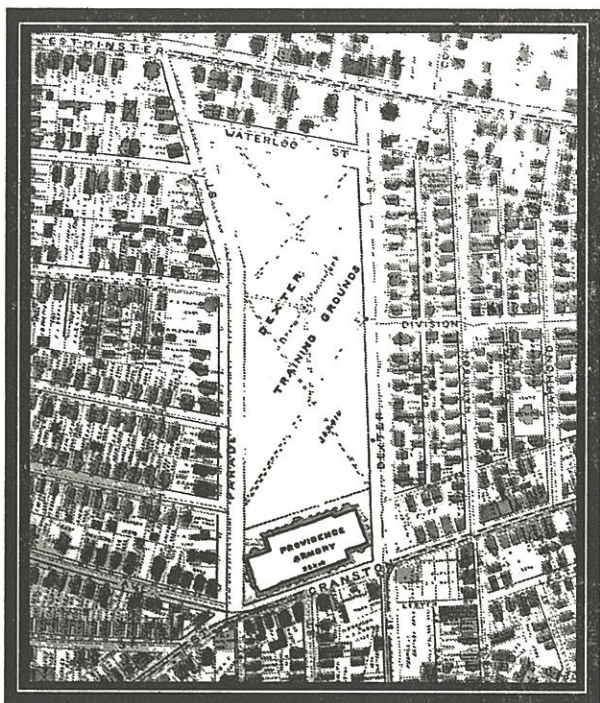


*Image courtesy of the Rhode Island State Archives.*

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Book # **118** *imp*



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published by L.J. Richards & Co., 1908.