Pawtucket became an important manufacturing center and a rich American city. All around downtown you can see layers of old and new, a mix of private and public buildings, and a blend of residential, recreational, and commercial uses.

The century-old buildings have great public value as evidence of Pawtucket's construction boom after 1850. Even more significantly, these edifices still have the capacity to delight our eyes with details.

Inspired to modernize from large village to business district by the mid-19th century, new buildings and all the things that make a city livable appeared—street improvements, such as paving, curbstones, crosswalks, as well as water works, gas street lights, and later, electric lights, public fountains, and parks. "The streets are well paved and kept in good order," it was recorded, "and the city is excellently lighted." It should have been—in 1875 alone, the city generously spent $5,000 on street lamps plus $23,000 for streets. The largest community in the United States still under town government, Pawtucket filed its city charter in 1886.

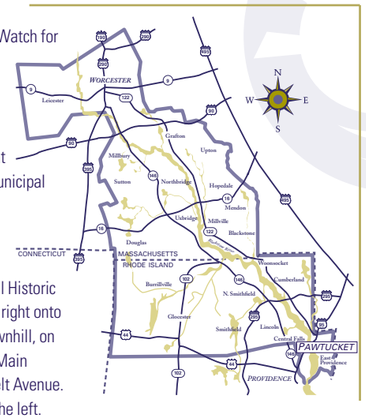
In all, it took hard work, scientific ingenuity, playful imagination, and a vision for what makes a city a good place to live and work. This guide will show you precisely where to look for outstanding architectural decoration and unusual artwork on Pawtucket's historic downtown buildings.

DIRECTIONS

BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY
NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

Traveling north:
Take Interstate 95 to Exit 28. Watch for signs for Slater Mill Historic Site and Visitor's Center. Turn left off exit ramp. Bear left at light, then bear right on Main Street towards river. Turn right on Roosevelt Avenue. Free municipal parking is on the left.

Traveling south:
Take Interstate 95 to Exit 27. Watch for signs for Slater Mill Historic Site and Visitor's Center. Turn right onto George Street, then right, downhill, on East Avenue. Turn right onto Main Street. Turn left onto Roosevelt Avenue. Free municipal parking is on the left.



ALONG THE WAY

- **Free parking** in Pawtucket on Roosevelt Avenue, across from City Hall. Public restrooms during business hours—City Hall, Visitor's Center, Public Library, and Slater Mill Historic Site.
- **Blackstone Valley Visitor's Center**—Corner of Main Street and Roosevelt Avenue. Free maps and information, videos, exhibits, and more. Restrooms. Free parking. Open seven days. 401-724-2200 or 800-454-2882.
- **More historic walks**—The Pawtucket Preservation Society publishes self-guided tours of the neighborhoods. The Quality Hill guide focuses on domestic architecture and the Church Hill guide takes you through industrial sites and religious landmarks. To research Pawtucket's interesting and historic sites, visit The Pawtucket Preservation Society, 67 Park Place, Pawtucket. 401-725-9581.
- **Learn about the Slater Mill Historic Site**—request a free site map. Free parking. Bus parking. Restrooms. For hours of operation and admission prices, please visit www.slatermill.org or call 401-725-8636
- **Daggett House 1685,** Pawtucket's oldest standing house, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Slater Park, off Rte. 1A, Newport Avenue, Pawtucket. Weekend tours June through September by the Pawtucket Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Admission charged. 401-722-2631.
- **To take a riverboat excursion**—spring, summer or fall—call for the schedule for The Explorer, Blackstone Valley Tourism Council. 401-724-2200 or 800-454-2882.

Congress established the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission in 1986, recognizing the national significance of the region between Providence, RI and Worcester, MA–the Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. The John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor is an affiliated area of the National Park Service.

This brochure was developed under the direction of The Rhode Island Historical Society in partnership with the Heritage Corridor Commission.

www.nps.gov/blac/index.htm

Special thanks to Mayor Robert Metivier, Elizabeth Johnson of The Spaulding House Research Library, The Deborah Cooke Sayles Public Library, and Suzanne Buchanan of the U.S. National Park Service.

rev2012

PAWTUCKET, RI

Walking Tour

Take a close-up look at what makes a city interesting.

John H. Chafee
BLACKSTONE RIVER VALLEY
National Heritage Corridor

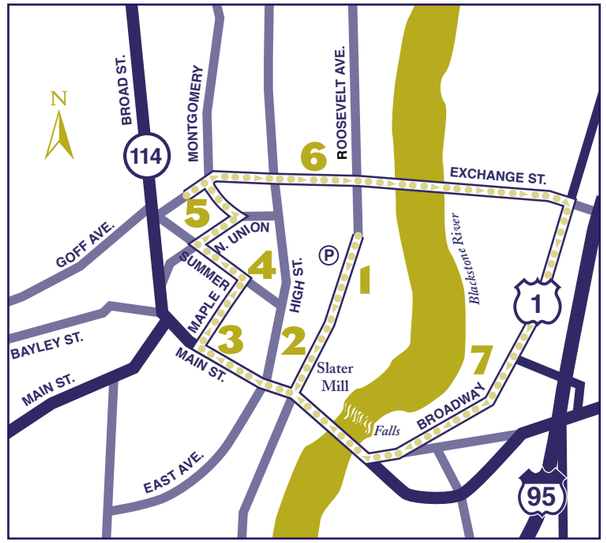
PAWTUCKET

Pawtucket, from "petuket" meaning *waterfall* in the Narragansett language, is one of only two Rhode Island cities to keep its native place name since its settlement. (Woonsocket, upriver, kept its native name, too.) First settled by Joseph Jenks in 1671, it was here that Samuel Slater opened the country's first successful cotton mill in 1793, setting into motion not only the cogs and wheels of his spinning and weaving machinery, but an entire new era for America—the Industrial Revolution.

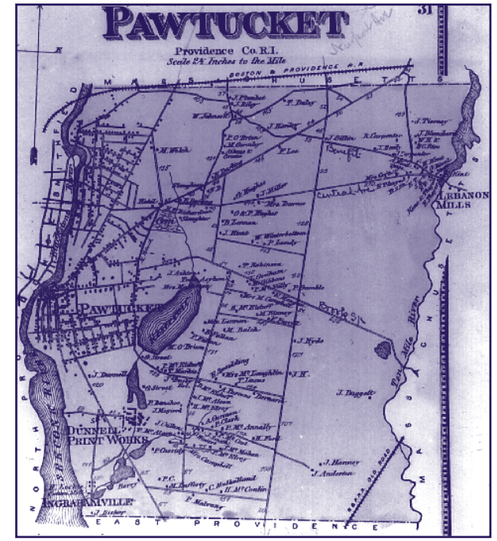
The Rhode Island Historical Society

In cities, old buildings are sometimes torn down to make way for the new. However, within an area of a few downtown blocks, enough architectural examples have survived from each of its successive developments to tell its whole story—from settlement to village, from village to town, from town to city.

A tree grows, but cities are *built*. From about 1840 to 1940, block by block, brick by brick, the buildings in downtown Pawtucket were drawn by architects, calculated by engineers, financed by industrialists, and built by armies of carpenters, stonemasons, bricklayers, plasterers, electricians, plumbers, metalworkers, glassmakers, roofers, and more.



PAWTUCKET



1 ROOSEVELT AVENUE

Your tour begins at Pawtucket City Hall, 1936, directly across from the municipal parking area on Roosevelt Avenue.

Look for two spirited eagles on the steps, theater masks above the doors, and stone-portraits honoring the president of the United States and the mayor of the city of 1936. The wall of stone-carved pictures tells the story of Pawtucket.

To the right of City Hall, you can enter the grounds of Slater Mill Historic Site. The plain wooden Slater Mill, originally a cotton mill, looks especially barn-like—a clue to its early date, 1793. Notice the tiny windows in the roof that add light to the attic. The complex details of the industrial engineering here, both visible and invisible, require some explanation, so ask for a free site guide and map.

The path leads to the banks of the Blackstone River. Docks, wharves, and warehouses located just a few hundred yards from here made shipping access to Pawtucket easy prior to 1900, and were a bustling part of the downtown activity. The Great River, as it was once called, ends a 46-mile journey from its headwaters in Massachusetts by spilling into the northernmost point of Narragansett Bay at Pawtucket.

From the park, there is a picturesque view of the Romanesque Revival style Pawtucket Congregational Church, 1867-1868, and, to its right, the former Episcopal parish of Trinity Church, 1852-1865. Trinity, constructed of native stone in the gothic style of a 14th century English parish church, is Pawtucket's oldest church building. As you proceed,enjoy the falls, then turn right on Main Street.

2 MAIN STREET

As you continue along Main Street, past High Street, you can get an idea of what downtown Pawtucket looked like around 1900 if you can imagine block after block of buildings like number 216, originally the Providence County Savings Bank, 1901. (The date on the facade is the founding date of the business). The great Chicago Colombian Exposition in 1893, featured buildings in this style, exciting many architects to try the "White City" look. Look for the Ionic capitals on the columns, plus many delicate details such as festoons, fan windows, and fanciful fish-scale glazing.

230 Main Street was originally the Wheaton Building, built in 1892. It was renamed the Toole Building, and raised two stories in 1922. With the exception of changes at street-level, this curved facade is remarkably intact. The impressive cornice, the copper-tiled canopy and balconet remain eye-catching.

Cast stone

255 Main Street was originally the Pacific National Bank, built in 1890. The gothic romance of this building against the Pawtucket skyline was lost when the original conical tower and other Queen Anne style dormers, turrets and pinnacles were removed to substitute a squared off, block-glassed fifth floor in 1952. However, the exuberance of the style still radiates from the second to the fourth stories.

Egg & dart with anthemion & palmette designs

Antefix ornament

Ionic column

Terra-cotta work

3 MAPLE STREET

Turning right onto Maple Street, you will pass the Pawtucket Mutual Insurance Company, 1906 and enlarged 1938. After 1850, a process was developed to compress nearly-dry clay powder into cast-iron molds, giving every brick precise industrial edges and an identical smooth, clean surface. Above the first-floor windows the same brick was creatively patterned into interesting lintels. Notice the limestone details and the urn-like finals.

4 SUMMER STREET

Turn right to 1 Summer Street, originally the United States Post Office, built in 1897. Look for lots of cast-stone Beaux-Arts style decoration, twin eagles, interesting trim, Doric columns, carefully proportioned arched windows, and the distinctive ribbed copper cupola.

Walk back along Summer Street to the Deborah Cook Sayles Public Library, 1902. It is impossible to imagine downtown Pawtucket without this white granite Ionic temple and its row of "antefix" ornaments dotting the skyline.

The six pure white marble high-reliefs chronicle various civilizations. Starting from the far left, look for Dante in the first; King Arthur and Shakespeare in the second; and Wotan binding Brunhilde in the magic sleep in the third. On the right, look for Moses in the fourth panel; ancient Greeks are shown in the fifth, and the last scene depicts Egyptian culture.

5 NORTH UNION STREET

Turn right onto North Union Street to see the corner block, originally the Summer Street Stables, 1891-1892.

How would you ever guess that this enormous brick building was specifically constructed for Harold F. Arnold as a livery for 176 horses with second-floor space for carriages and carts, third-floor feed storage and hay-loft, ground-floor offices, blacksmith shop and comfortable ladies' and gentlemen's waiting rooms?

The clue is high up on the wall: a terra-cotta inscription of the compassionate Bible verse Joel I:18, "How Do The Beasts Groan!" It had water-powered elevators, electric arc-lights, and running water at wash basins indoors as well as an outdoor drinking fountain.

Bricklayers mortared over 650,000 bricks to build the Arnold Stables. What was their time worth? Around 1879, nationwide economic setbacks deflated a mason's $3.75 pay to $1.25 for a ten-hour shift. Twenty years later, their wage recovered to 39 cents an hour, or about $21 for a 6-day week.

6 EXCHANGE STREET

Turn left on a short block of Montgomery Street, and then turn left along Exchange Street, until you come to the B.P.O.E. Pawtucket Elks Lodge Building, 1926. Take an inventory of the details on this Spanish Renaissance Revival style building: a perfectly intact antlered elk's head, flags, festoons, mottoed medallions, a fluted-shell balcony, zig-zag balconets supported by jumbo brackets, a parade of colonets, Corinthian capitals, broken scroll and triangular pediments and a long-short-long scored brick pattern.

Next-door is the Pawtucket Times Building, 1895. Although the first three

Festoon

stories of this Romanesque Revival facade are plain and functional, from the fourth floor up the details are unexpectedly interesting.

Turn back and walk along Exchange Street until you come to the George Fuller & Company Mill, and the former Rhode Island Cardboard Company Mill, both 1880. Here you can compare the form and function of a small wooden factory building with the expanse of a brick mill. Exterior stair towers evolved from a need for fireproof exits. Like this one, many local industrial buildings have been successfully adapted for reuse as residences or offices.

Continuing up the block, you will see the Pawtucket Armory, 1894. Ordinary brick and common stone was used to create this romantic, moatless city fortress. The thick quarry-faced granite in a random bond pattern on the first story adds to its look of impenetrability.

7 BROADWAY BACK TO MAIN STREET

Turn right, and stay on the right-hand side until you find 139 Broadway, the former Metcalf Mansion Carriage House, 1879-80. The roof spirelet on this tiny wooden building draws your curiosity. Although altered with a storefront, it is among a handful of surviving carriage houses in all of Pawtucket.

130 Broadway was the Free Will Baptist Church, 1884. Both the church and Metcalf carriage house are late-Victorian style, and typically characterized by the features you see here—asymmetrical design, mixed materials, fancy shingles and spindlework, sturdy porch posts, rows of brackets, and a generous assortment of eclectic romantic details.

After the falls, turn right to return to the Roosevelt Avenue parking area.