

# The Rhode Island Auditorium

(c) Michael Hamel, 2012

For sixty-three years, the Rhode Island Auditorium stood at 1111 North Main Street in Providence, Rhode Island, just steps away from the city's expansive North Burial Ground, and less than a half mile from the neighboring city of Pawtucket.<sup>1</sup> The location, away from the congestion of the center of the capital city, was ideal for hosting large events. When the Auditorium opened on February 27, 1926,<sup>2</sup> North Main Street had recently been designated as part of the new US Highway system as Route 1,<sup>3</sup> and was also served by public streetcars, two factors that spurred development in the area. The previous summer, the Providence Cycledrome, a 13,000 seat bicycle racing track, opened just up the street on the city line.<sup>4</sup>

The front facade of the Auditorium was dominated by its large gable end, adorned with the word "ARENA" painted in large bold letters, between dramatically sloped roof lines. A smaller, and much more ornate, "head house" sat in front of the utilitarian main structure. Patrons entered through five sets of double doors framed by a gentle archway that encompassed a marquee; the marquee would eventually be topped by a neon "R.I. AUDITORIUM" sign.<sup>5</sup> Inside, during the Auditorium's glory days, fans passed through a set of turnstiles in a small 40x40 foot vestibule, then congregated in a 150 foot-long, smoke-filled foyer flanked by concession stands on both sides.<sup>6</sup> Finally, patrons would pass through one of a pair of lobbies to reach the arena itself; if it was a hockey night, they would see a hockey rink encircled with chicken wire, illuminated with fifty-five 750-watt lighting fixtures, and, looming overhead, a hanging scoreboard (with analog dials) that proclaimed it was "Bulova Time."<sup>7</sup>

Opening night featured fourteen events on the program, which was also broadcast by WJAR radio beginning at 8:15PM. Following a rendition of "The Star-Spangled Banner," Auditorium Corporation president John A. "Duff" Gammons presided over the dedication ceremonies.<sup>8</sup> Speakers included U.S. Senator Jesse Metcalf, Providence Mayor Joseph Gainer, and outgoing Rhode Island Lieutenant Governor Nathaniel W. Smith. Then the entertainment began, with Cathleen Pope, of Iceland, New York taking the ice for a figure skating exhibition.<sup>9</sup> The headline attraction was the figure skating duo of Theresa Weld Blanchard and Nathaniel Niles, natives of Brookline, Massachusetts, who had competed in the 1920 and 1924 Olympics and combined to win eighteen United States skating titles.<sup>10</sup> At the conclusion of the evening, which also included such eclectic fare as barrel jumping and a "burlesque hockey match," patrons who had paid between 85 cents (general admission) and \$3.30 (box seat) for a ticket were allowed onto the rink for a public skating session.<sup>11</sup>

The first regular tenants of the Auditorium were the Rhode Island Reds hockey team, founded in the fall of 1926 by Judge James E. Dooley. Dooley was a prominent attorney with strong political ties and

a taste for sports. He served as a judge in the Eighth District Court for a year after his predecessor, Willis S. Knowles, was shot to death near his summer home in North Scituate, Rhode Island in September, 1915.<sup>12</sup> In 1922, Dooley ran an unsuccessful campaign for Lieutenant Governor as a Republican.<sup>13</sup> Meanwhile, Dooley was part of a group which owned and managed the Providence Steam Roller football team; the club hosted games at the Cycledrome and captured an NFL title in 1928 during a brief seven year membership in the league.<sup>14</sup>

In 1926, Dooley's Reds joined the Boston Tigers, New Haven Eagles, Quebec Beavers, and Springfield Indians in the new Canadian-American Hockey League.<sup>15</sup> This led to a few complex relationships – some would say "conflicts" – since Hubert Milot, who managed the Auditorium, also controlled the Beavers,<sup>16</sup> while Dooley, his tenant and competitor, would serve as the president of the CAHL.<sup>17</sup> Former Major League Baseball player Jean Dubuc was the Reds general manager for their first fourteen years of existence,<sup>18</sup> while juggling a series of other jobs; Dubuc coached the Brown University baseball and hockey teams from 1927 through 1929,<sup>19</sup> and later worked as a coach and scout for the Detroit Tigers.<sup>20</sup> The Reds had affiliations with many NHL teams over the next five decades, including the Montreal Canadiens from 1928-1933 and two stints as a Boston Bruins farm team during the 1930's and again in the late 1950's and early 1960's.<sup>21</sup>

In 1929, Paul De Wolfe, a "Brown trustee and member of the Auditorium Board of Governors," offered Lou Pieri the job as General Manager, which set the course of the arena's future.<sup>22</sup> Louis Arthur Raymond Pieri was born in Franklin, Massachusetts on February 23, 1897, and graduated from Franklin High School, where he met his future wife Mildred Arnold.<sup>23</sup> He was named captain of the basketball team at Dean Academy<sup>24</sup> before moving to Providence<sup>25</sup> and enrolling at Brown University. Pieri's interest in sports and his organizational ability made an immediate impact at the institution; in 1918, Pieri re-constituted the basketball team, which had been disbanded six years earlier, and served as coach that season and captain for two seasons.<sup>26</sup> Pieri graduated in 1920 with Masters of Science and Bachelor of Philosophy degrees, and earned a \$750 grant from E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company to stay at the University and pursue his doctorate in Chemistry.<sup>27</sup>

However, the pull of sports was too strong. Pieri left Brown and became a science teacher and coach at Rutgers Prep for two years, then spent five years in a similar role at Central Falls (Rhode Island) High School.<sup>28</sup> He continued to show a talent for promotion. As early as 1921, Pieri had organized a Providence Steam Roller semipro basketball team that played against other local squads for several years.<sup>29</sup> Pieri later manned one of the ticket-taking stations at the Auditorium on its opening night,<sup>30</sup> and in 1928, while at Central Falls, Pieri formed the Rhode Island Interscholastic Athletic Conference by linking the school with thirteen other districts which had been excluded from the decade-old Rhode Island Interscholastic Athletic League.<sup>31</sup>

As General Manager of the Auditorium, Pieri was responsible for booking events, and filled nights when the Reds were absent with boxing, wrestling, hypnotists - anything that would draw a

crowd. The Reds became frequent winners, capturing three CAHL titles between 1930 and 1934 and an AHL Calder Cup in 1938.<sup>32</sup> By then, Judge Dooley was busy with his newest venture, horse racing at the Narragansett Race Track in East Providence.<sup>33</sup> In October 1939, the Auditorium purchased the Reds from Dooley and Dubuc – with an assist from concessions magnate Louis Jacobs, who financed part of the deal in exchange for a sixty year contract to provide Auditorium patrons with peanuts, popcorn, and soda.<sup>34</sup> The Reds won yet another championship that season, and soon Pieri took over ownership of the Auditorium and the Reds.

Pieri's promotion skills allowed him to rise to a prominent role among his fellow arena owners and managers in the new Arena Managers Association of America. Together with colleagues Walter Brown (manager of the Boston Garden) and John H. Harris, Pieri was a founder of the Ice Capades which debuted in the fall of 1940.<sup>35</sup> The AMAA included thirty arenas from coast-to-coast and nearby Canada, booking major acts such as Bob Hope, Dean Martin & Jerry Lewis, and a series of "Biggest Show of <insert year here>" events, including the 1951 version with Nat King Cole, Duke Ellington, and Sarah Vaughn, and other incarnations headlined by Rock 'n Roll icons like Bill Haley and the Comets.<sup>36</sup> Pieri's connections improved the quality of events that were held in the 5000+ seat Auditorium, despite its frequently ineffective heating system and lack of air conditioning.<sup>37</sup> The Ice Capades and Ice Follies, and derivatives such as the Water Follies made regular visits, along with Wild West shows including "Gene Autry's Flying A Ranch Stampede," and the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus.<sup>38</sup>

College sports also proved popular, in an era where on-campus facilities were primitive or non-existent. The Providence College basketball team played a game or two a year at the Auditorium from 1932 through 1954, before the new Alumni Hall opened for the 1955-56 season. The college's hockey team played seven games in the Auditorium in 1927 before disbanding, and then played all of their home games there from 1952 to 1972. Pieri also maintained close ties to Brown University, regularly hosting Alumni events at his home in Pawtucket<sup>39</sup> and at his summer place on Lake Damariscotta in Jefferson, Maine.<sup>40</sup> When the university's hockey team restarted play in 1947, Pieri offered the squad the use of the Auditorium.<sup>41</sup>

In 1946, several members of the AMAA formed a pro basketball league with a familiar-sounding name: the Basketball Association of America. Lou Pieri borrowed the familiar "Steam Roller" moniker for his club, christening them as the "Providence Steamrollers." Pieri planned to adopt the fast break style popularized by Coach Frank Keaney at Rhode Island State, and hired five of his former players (Ernie Calverley, Armand Cure, George Mearns, Earl Shannon, and Bob Shea) but was unsuccessful in his quest to land Keaney, settling for Pawtucket High School coach Robert Morris.<sup>42</sup> For three seasons, the Steamrollers struggled on the court, and Pieri lost as much as \$200,000 before folding the team as part of the BAA-NBL merger in 1949 which created the modern NBA. Walter Brown then negotiated an agreement with Pieri for the two men to buy the Boston Celtics from the Boston Garden; Pieri secured a few Celtics games a year in Providence as part of the deal.

Pieri remained committed to the success of the Reds and the Auditorium. Even when he flirted with putting the Reds on the market during lean years, he did so on the condition that a local owner or partner could be found,<sup>43</sup> even when his focus began to shift during the 1960's towards his burgeoning blueberry empire in Maine. Pieri's love of food and cooking was well-documented, particularly by his waistline, and, after selling his stakes of the Ice Capades in 1963<sup>44</sup> and the Celtics in 1965,<sup>45</sup> his blueberry farm became the fifth largest producer in the state.<sup>46</sup> But the Auditorium was growing old and losing its charm. After Pieri's death following a heart attack in June 1967, the Reds and the Auditorium were sold to George Sage. Attendance stayed solid, but the arrival of the new downtown Providence Civic Center in 1972, with its 11,000+ seat capacity and modern amenities, rendered the Auditorium obsolete. Various attempts were made to keep the building alive, including subdividing the structure into two levels, placing tennis courts where the hockey rink had once been. Later, a club named "Main Event" was opened in part of the building, and hosted smaller concerts, including U2's fifth show in the United States on December 12, 1980.<sup>47</sup> In 1989, the Auditorium was demolished and a parking lot now occupies the site, with only a plaque as a visible reminder of the decades of entertainment that took place there.<sup>48</sup>

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March 31, 2012

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<sup>1</sup> Rhode Island Reds Heritage Society web site: [http://rireds.org/2010Website/History\\_Arena.htm](http://rireds.org/2010Website/History_Arena.htm)

<sup>2</sup> Several sources cite February 18, 1926 as opening night, but articles in the *Providence Journal* from February 1926 (cited below) clearly indicate that Saturday night, February 27, 1926 was the official opening night, and I did not find any mention of an event at the Auditorium on February 18.

<sup>3</sup> 1925 US Highway Plan, US Department of Agriculture, Bureau of Public Roads: <http://www.us-highways.com/1925bpr.htm> "The USDA BPR report is dated October 30, 1925 and was approved by the Secretary of Agriculture on November 18, 1925"

<sup>4</sup> Rhode Island Art in Ruins website: <http://www.artinruins.com/arch/?id=historical&pr=cyclodome> Developer Peter Laudati backed the Cyclodrome, whose capacity was reportedly the largest in the world for bicycle racing when it opened on June 3, 1925.

<sup>5</sup> Rhode Island Reds Heritage Society web site: [http://rireds.org/2010Website/History\\_Arena.htm](http://rireds.org/2010Website/History_Arena.htm) Undated photographs of the exterior. Earlier footage from the "When the Reds Ruled the Roost" documentary (directed by Joe Rocco, released April, 2009) shows that the sign above the marquee was originally "Arena" not "R.I. Auditorium."

<sup>6</sup> The area leading to the arena was referred to in the *Journal* as a "Head House," either because it was located at the "head" of the building, or possibly because the building lavatories were located there. Building details described in "Carnival Arranged At New Auditorium," *Providence Journal*, 2/20/1926, p6, and a related article in the *Providence Journal*, 2/27/1926.

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<sup>7</sup> Footage from "When the Reds Ruled the Roost." The scoreboard in the undated footage is nearly identical to the one used at the Boston Garden in the early 1960's. In "Carnival Arranged At New Auditorium" the lighting details are mentioned, and it is noted that the lighting was 60% brighter than the Boston Arena.

<sup>8</sup> Gammons was the corporation president, and the 2/28/1926 edition of the *Providence Journal* listed the full list of corporation officials on page 4:

President: John A. Gammons

Secretary and Treasurer: James B. Barrett

Trustees: Thomas H. West, Jr, Florrimon Howe, and Wilson G. Wing

Directors: John A. Gammons, Walter Callender, Donald E. Jackson, Frederick B. Read, James B. Barrett, Albert Geiger, Jr (managing director of the Boston Arena), and Arthur C. Wise (treasurer of the Boston Arena)

General Manager: Hubert C. Milot

<sup>9</sup> The program for the night was listed in the 2/27/1926 *Providence Journal*. Pope had been performing for many years, as early as February 1910 when she was 11 years old; see "New York Skaters Win In Home Rink," *New York Times*, 2/15/1910.

<sup>10</sup> In 1920, Weld became the first American to win a figure skating medal in the Olympics. Weld and Niles also competed at the 1924 and 1928 Games:

<http://www.usfigureskating.org/content/events/200506/olympics/olympic-medalists.pdf>; As a pair, they won every U.S. Championship from 1918-1927 (no event was held in 1919). Both also won multiple U.S. Championships as single skaters: Weld in 1914, and again from 1920-1924; Niles in 1918, 1925, and 1927. See:

<http://www.xcelenergycenter.com/uploads/assets/saintpaul2008/news/Past%20U.S.%20Champions.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Display Ad, *Providence Journal*, 2/27/1926, p19. Reserved seats were also available at \$1.10, \$1.65, or \$2.20 a ticket. The ad also mentions public skating on Sunday, 2/28, with much cheaper prices: 50 cents for "Gentlemen" and 35 cents for "Ladies and Children."

<sup>12</sup> "SHOOT JUSTICE DEAD NEAR HIS OWN DOOR; From Ambush Slayer Fires at Rhode Island Jurist on Way to Court," *New York Times*, 9/7/1915, Knowles was shot and died on September 6.

<sup>13</sup> "R.I. Republicans Pick Harold Gross," *Boston Daily Globe*, 10/12/1922. The article states that "James E. Dooley of Johnston was nominated for Lieutenant Governor..." Lost to Democrat Felix A. Toupin of Lincoln, while William Smith Flynn defeated Gross for Governor. <http://sos.ri.gov/library/history/>

<sup>14</sup> Hogrogian, John, *The Steam Roller*, featured in *The Coffin Corner*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1980) published by the Professional Football Researchers Association (<http://www.profootballresearchers.org>). The Steam Roller team was founded in 1916 as a semipro team, played in the NFL from 1925-1931, and continued as a semipro team on and off for the next thirty years. The football field was squeezed into the Cycledrome's infield inside the banked wooden bicycle track, and Hogrogian writes that one end zone was just five yards deep before reaching the track.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.hockeydb.com/ihdb/stats/leagues/seasons/cahl19271927.html>

<sup>16</sup> "Sprague Cleghorn For Newark Club," *The Montreal Gazette*, 9/18/1928, states that Milot sold the Beavers to the Newark Arena Company on September 17, 1928, which meant that the CAHL did not actually have a team in Canada from 1928-29 through 1931-32, until the Beavers returned for the 1932-33 season.

<sup>17</sup> "HOCKEY LEAGUE ELECTS.; Canadian-American Circuit Names Dooley as Its President," *New York Times*, 4/8/1929; "Hockey Plans Held Up," *The Montreal Gazette*, 10/6/1934.

<sup>18</sup> Mancuso, Jim. *Hockey In Providence*, Arcadia, 2006.

<sup>19</sup> Simon, Tom and Guy Waterman. "Jean Dubuc", SABR's Baseball Biography Project:

<http://bioproj.sabr.org/bioproj.cfm?a=v&v=l&bid=1509&pid=3825>; "Dubuc Works Brown Squad," *Providence News*, 3/28/1928; "Kelleher New Coach of Brown Baseball," *The Sunday (Providence) Tribune*, 10/5/1929;

<http://www.brownbears.com>

<sup>20</sup> "Harris May Remain as Detroit Pilot," *The Milwaukee Journal*, 10/15/1931, mentions Dubuc as being out as a coach, but may "remain as a scout." The SABR bio (ibid) mentions his scouting, including signing Birdie Tebbetts, which is also mentioned by Tebbetts in a 1949 article in *The Atlantic*:

<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1949/09/i-apos-d-rather-catch/5822/>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.hockeydb.com>

- <sup>22</sup> "From Teacher to Millionaire," *The Cowl*, 12/7/1966. Providence College student newspaper; part one of a two part feature on Pieri. Available from: <http://content.yudu.com/Library/A15i0c/TheProvidenceCowlVol/resources/5.htm>
- <sup>23</sup> 1962-63 Boston Celtics Yearbook profile of Lou Pieri.
- <sup>24</sup> 1958-59 Boston Celtics Yearbook profile of Lou Pieri. Dean Academy is now Dean Junior College, still located in Pieri's hometown of Franklin, Massachusetts. Pieri later served 15 years as a trustee and 10 years as Chairman of the Board – see article in *The Cowl*, 12/14/1966.
- <sup>25</sup> Pieri apparently lived at 773 Douglas Avenue throughout his college career. See *The Catalogue of Brown University - One Hundred and Fifty-Third Year - 1916-1917* published by the University, Providence RI 1916; and *The Catalogue of Brown University - One Hundred and Fifty-Seventh Year - 1920-1921* published by the University, Providence RI 1920; both available via Google Books.
- <sup>26</sup> [http://www.brownbears.com/sports/m-baskbl/mbbl\\_history/game-by-game2](http://www.brownbears.com/sports/m-baskbl/mbbl_history/game-by-game2); the 1918-1919 squad finished 2-12, earning its first victory over Pieri's alma mater, Dean Academy, 26-22.
- <sup>27</sup> *The Catalogue of Brown University - One Hundred and Fifty-Seventh Year - 1920-1921*. Inflation conversion chart at <http://www.minneapolisfed.org> shows that \$750 in 1920 would be worth \$8469.31 in 2011 dollars (accessed 12/29/2011).
- <sup>28</sup> "From Teacher to Millionaire," *The Cowl*, 12/7/1966.
- <sup>29</sup> "Steam Rollers Tie Tigers In Hard Overtime Game," *Providence News*, 1/29/1921, mentions that Pieri was a starter on the team and required "medical attention after the game." Another article four years later states that Pieri was the team manager; see "Natick Town Team Signed To Play The Rollers Here," *Providence News*, 2/12/1925.
- <sup>30</sup> Mentioned in "When the Reds Ruled the Roost."
- <sup>31</sup> "From Teacher to Millionaire", *The Cowl*, 12/7/1966 gives Pieri the credit but appears to have the number of teams/districts wrong. A site dedicated to the history of the Interscholastic League provides the 1928 date (<http://www.rihssports.com/CHAMPIONSHIPS%20ORGANIZED/INFO%20ON%20RI%20HS%20SPORTS%20HISTORY.htm>) and the list of 14 teams. In 1932 the two leagues merged into a single organization which still exists today.
- <sup>32</sup> [http://www.hockeydb.com/ihdb/stats/display\\_standings.php?tmi=7562](http://www.hockeydb.com/ihdb/stats/display_standings.php?tmi=7562) and [http://www.hockeydb.com/ihdb/stats/display\\_standings.php?tmi=7564](http://www.hockeydb.com/ihdb/stats/display_standings.php?tmi=7564)
- <sup>33</sup> <http://www.intothestudio.com/narragansettpark> Dooley and Walter O'Hara opened the track in August 1934 just over two months after successfully guiding legislation to legalize horse racing in Rhode Island. In 1938, Dooley succeeded O'Hara as president of the Narragansett Racing Association after O'Hara was forced out in a dispute with Rhode Island Governor Robert Quinn.
- <sup>34</sup> This statement is based on a single source. I am assuming a loan was part of the deal based on evidence presented in "Look What Louie Wrought", *Sports Illustrated*, 5/29/1972, by John Underwood and Morton Sharnik. The article details the rise of the Jacobs concessions empire, first as Jacobs Brothers and then as Sportservice in 1948 and Emprise in 1961. "Louie" Jacobs would routinely make loans to team owners in exchange for concessions contracts, including an interest free \$250,000 loan to Connie Mack in 1951. The article specifically states that a 1939 contract "granted Sportservice concessions rights and ultimate authority over any transfer or sale of the club [Reds] for 60 years—to 1999" and that by the late 1960s, "the concessionaire also owned the land on which the arena was built." These provisions caused a prospective Boston-based buyer of the Auditorium and the Reds to back out, leaving the door open for George Sage to purchase them – and sign a 99 year concessions deal with Emprise.
- <sup>35</sup> <http://www.icestagearchive.com/icecapades.html>
- <sup>36</sup> List of acts taken from various Billboard articles and from <http://artinruins.com/arch/?id=historical&pr=riauditorium>. List of AMAA arenas taken from ad in *Billboard*, 8/9/1952, which listed the following venues:
- |                             |                                      |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| The Arena; Windsor, Ontario | Maple Leaf Gardens; Toronto, Ontario |
| The Forum; Montreal, Quebec | The Auditorium; Ottawa, Ontario      |
| Boston Garden; Boston       | The Coliseum; W. Springfield, MA     |
| RI Auditorium; Providence   | Memorial Auditorium; Buffalo         |
| War Memorial; Syracuse      | The Arena; New Haven, CT             |

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Sports Arena; Hershey, PA	The Arena; Philadelphia
Uline Arena; Washington, D.C.	The Gardens; Pittsburgh
Memorial Arena; Johnstown, PA	Coliseum; Raleigh, NC
Sports Arena; Toledo, OH	The Arena; Cleveland
Cincinnati Gardens; Cincinnati	The Arena; Chicago
Memorial Coliseum; Ft. Wayne, IN	The Arena; St. Louis
Ice Arena; Dallas	Will Rodgers Coliseum; Fort Worth
The Arena; Minneapolis	AK-SAR-BEN Coliseum; Omaha, NE
New Coliseum; Denver	Swing Auditorium; San Bernardino, CA
Pan-Pacific Auditorium; Los Angeles	Glacier Garden; San Diego

<sup>37</sup> "The Billboard First Annual Auditorium-Arena Review," *Billboard*, 12/22/1951, lists a capacity of 5200 for "stage shows" or "boxing" and 5000 for "arena show." The size of the hockey rink is listed as 100x225, circus floor space 110x235, with a ceiling height of 75 (all measurements in feet).

<sup>38</sup> *Billboard*, various issues from 1940s and 1950s, available via Google archives. "Gene Autry" mentioned in *Billboard*, 5/30/1942, week-long appearance, with 10 percent of gross to be given to the Navy Relief Society. "Ringling Bros" mentioned in *Billboard*, 8/21/1943. The circus act appeared despite complaints about the lack of sufficient space for their animals.

<sup>39</sup> *Brown Alumni Monthly*, May 1950, lists his address as 17 Leicester Way, Pawtucket. See [http://www.archive.org/stream/brownalumnimonth509brow/brownalumnimonth509brow\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/brownalumnimonth509brow/brownalumnimonth509brow_djvu.txt)

<sup>40</sup> *Brown Alumni Monthly*, July 1966, [http://www.archive.org/stream/brownalumnimonth669brow/brownalumnimonth669brow\\_djvu.txt](http://www.archive.org/stream/brownalumnimonth669brow/brownalumnimonth669brow_djvu.txt)

<sup>41</sup> *Bear Tracks: The View from the Archives - Moulton's Miracle On Ice: Post-War Hockey At Brown* by Peter Mackie '59. Published in *Brown Bear Magazine*, A Publication of the Brown University Sports Foundation, Vol 2, Issue 2, Winter, 2010-11. Available at [http://www.sportsfoundation.brown.edu/bbmag/documents/BBMweb\\_000.pdf](http://www.sportsfoundation.brown.edu/bbmag/documents/BBMweb_000.pdf) Brown's on-campus hockey arena, Meehan Auditorium, would open in 1961 and later host Providence College hockey games in 1972-73 before Providence's new Schneider Arena opened; see Providence College 2011-2012 Online Team Guide (<http://www.friars.com>).

<sup>42</sup> Rosen, Charley. *The First Tip-Off: the Incredible Story of the Birth of the NBA*. New York: McGraw Hill, 2009, p65-72. Rosen claims that the team was named after Pieri's "construction company" (I have not found any evidence that it existed), but the lineage seems more likely to flow from Pieri's earlier semipro basketball team and the local football team. *The First Tip-Off* is available online at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/62132754/The-First-Tip-Off-the-Incredible-Story-of-the-Birth-of-the-NBA> . Morris lasted just one season as coach, and the Steamrollers went through four coaches in three seasons, including Ken Loeffler, who later won NIT and NCAA titles as head coach at LaSalle.

<sup>43</sup> At the end of the 1954 season, Pieri announced that he wanted to find a partner to buy half the team: see "Owner Lou Pieri Puts AHL Hockey Club on Market," *Christian Science Monitor*, 3/22/1954; also "Pieri's RI Reds Are for Sale," *Hartford Courant*, 2/4/1967; and see a note in *The Windsor Star*, 2/6/1967: "Pieri stressed, however, that he would sell the franchise only to interests concerned with keeping the club in the state."

<sup>44</sup> "From Teacher to Millionaire," *The Cowl*, 12/7/1966. The Ice Capades were sold by Brown, Pieri, Harris, and three others for \$6 million in 1963.

<sup>45</sup> Taylor, John. *The Rivalry: Bill Russell, Wilt Chamberlain, and the Golden Age of Basketball*. New York: Ballantine, 2006, p256 and p311. Pieri sold his share of Celtics along with Marjorie Brown's share and Red Auerbach's 11.6% share for \$3 million in the summer of 1965 to Ruppert Knickerbocker Brewery.

<sup>46</sup> "Mr. Pieri meet Mr. Cousy," *The Cowl*, 12/14/1966, part two of two part feature. Available at <http://content.yudu.com/Library/A15i0h/TheProvidenceCowlVol/resources/3.htm> In 1960, Pieri bought 5000 acres to grow blueberries "as a hobby" but this later "grew" to 25,000 acres, "making Pieri the fifth largest blueberry grower in the state of Maine, the largest blueberry-producing area in the country." For his love of food, see the 1962-63 Boston Celtics yearbook: "'Eating relaxes me,' he says, and his figure attests to his success at relaxation."

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<sup>47</sup> "Tennis Out & Talent In At The Old Rhode Island Aud," *Billboard*, 10/25/1980, p27. This article mentions the tennis courts and Main Event: "The new club, owned in part and operated by local promoter Frank Russo, will open next Friday (25). The club has a capacity of 1,500, with 500 of the original Auditorium seats placed in the balcony. Downstairs there will be table and chairs and capacity for ballroom dancing." For the U2 show details, see <http://www.u2tours.com>; Also see <http://artinruins.com/arch/?id=historical&pr=riauditorium>

<sup>48</sup> "SPORTS WEEK: Auditorium was more than just a hockey rink," *Providence Journal*, 4/12/1989. The Auditorium fared better than its nearby neighbor, the Cycledrome, which had been torn down in 1937, just twelve years after opening. The Cycledrome was replaced with a Loew's Drive-In movie theatre, which in turn was demolished and turned into a shopping plaza in 1977; see <http://www.artinruins.com/arch/?id=historical&pr=cyclodome>. Plaque was dedicated at 11:11am (in honor of 1111 North Main Street) on July 31, 2010.