

FORM B - BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Areas(s) Form Number

030-06-011

Springfield
North

HLY.282

Town/City: Holyoke

Place: (*neighborhood or village*): South Holyoke

Photograph



View from the northwest. Photo by Zachary Violette

Address: 181 Appleton Street

Historic Name: American Braiding Company Building

Uses: Present: Mixed Use
Original: Industrial

Date of Construction: 1920

Source: *Springfield Republican* January 13, 1920, 4

Style/Form: Not researched / daylight factory

Architect/Builder: Patrick J Kennedy / Patrick J Kennedy

Exterior Materials:

Foundation: Brick

Wall/Trim: Brick / Concrete

Roof: Membrane

Outbuildings: None

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Rehabilitation with new windows, entrance, elevator shaft (2017)

Condition: Good

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 0.904 acres

Setting: Originally a dense industrial landscape made up mostly of three-to-five story masonry buildings: residential, commercial, industrial, and mixed-use. Many of these have been demolished and replaced with vacant lots or lower density construction

Locus Map (*North is up*)



Recorded By: Zachary Violette

Organization: Consultant, Holyoke Office of Planning and Development

Date (*month/year*): October 2020

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

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- Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.
If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The American Braiding Company Building, constructed in 1920, is a four-story industrial loft of steel frame construction. A so-called "daylight factory" because of its generous fenestration, steel frame, and cast concrete construction developed in large part to provide greater natural light into industrial spaces than conventional masonry mill construction didn't allow. Fifty or even 80 percent of the wall surfaces of such buildings could be glazed, according to historian Betsy Hunter Bradley.¹ The building's exterior is clad in red brick. Standing at the corner of Race and Appleton streets - and having addresses on both - the building stands 105 feet along Race and 100 on Appleton. The building's four tall stories are set above a low basement.

The exterior is divided into five bays along Race Street by brick piers. The center bay of the Race street elevation has a raised parapet, suggesting the location of an original freight elevator. The original main entrance is placed in the center bay, with a loading dock next to it. Each bay has a wide window opening, headed by soldier course brick. Sills appear to be of brownstone. The same pattern of bays with wide windows continues down each of the building's four elevations. Two original secondary entrances are placed along Appleton street. These, like the entrances on the front, are surrounded by wire-cut brick with concrete corner blocks. A windowless section of the rear (east) elevation provides space for an iron fire balcony. A tall brick chimney is set at the northeast corner.

As part of a recent rehabilitation, the entrance has been reoriented to the north elevation. Here a single-story, glass wall addition with a flat roof and swooping eave line provides a new primary entrance. It is reached by a large, poured concrete accessibility ramp. A new elevator shaft, taller than the roofline of the main building, is centered on the north elevation. This appendage is clad in stucco. Windows throughout have been replaced by aluminum replacement windows, consisting of awning type sash, with fixed lights and multi-light false-muntin transoms above. These replaced the building's original multi-light steel-frame factory windows, some of which had been replaced with glass block before the recent renovations.

The building is set on the sidewalk line along Race and Appleton street. A yard along the building's north side provides space for the new entrance setup. The parcel on which the building stands has been joined to neighboring parcels facing Main Street. With the 1980s demolition of the buildings there, that area now serves as a paved parking lot.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

This building was built at the tail end of Holyoke's rapid industrial development. The nineteenth-century saw Holyoke transition from a "New City" conceived in the late 1840s by Boston textile interests to take advantage of the waterpower of the Connecticut River, into a complex manufacturing center hosting a diversity of industries, primarily paper making, textile weaving, and machine production. Throughout this dynamic period, the waterpower company's control of building sites in South Holyoke constricted available land, leading to high real estate prices and intense utilization of lots. This property is a good example of that trend. For most of the nineteenth century, Race Street was a residential landscape, consisting mostly of freestanding, wood-frame buildings, many of which were single-family end houses. Two such buildings, two-and-one-half stories in height, stood on this site as late as 1915. Buildings like this were quickly being replaced by industrial buildings for small to medium scale enterprises.

Around this time, the lot was assembled by the American Braiding Company. Founded in 1918 by Bennett Feinstein (1876-1956), a Russian immigrant who worked in the leather trade, American Braiding Company originally manufactured laces for

¹ Bradley, *The Works*, 162-168

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corsets and shoes. The company had been founded in rented space in the nearby Holyoke Value and Hydrant Company Building at 150 Race Street(HLY.280, demolished). Using a \$100,000 mortgage from the Holyoke Savings Bank, the company announced that it was to build a new building on this site. With a footprint of 100 x 55, the building was to rise seven stories.² Patrick J. Kennedy, of the Kennedy Construction Company, served as the architect.³ The new building, finished in 1920, tripled the company's capacity, allowing it to add 900 new machines, bringing the company's workforce from would rise from 80 to nearly three hundred.⁴ While the finished building was only four stories in height, plans were announced in 1921 to increase the footprint to 100 by 105, and add the planned addition three stories.⁵ While the latter expansion took place, the vertical extension did not. The company does not appear to have used the entirety of the building. In 1921 the Philip Harmon and Company blank book manufacturer moved its 500 employees from New York to Holyoke and occupied the third and fourth floor of the building.⁶ Around this time, Feinstein took ownership of the building, leasing it back to the company.⁷ The company soon expanded from shoe and corset laces to fabric insulators for electrical wiring. It pioneered that expanding business. It eventually changed its name to the American Electric Cable Company.

In 1943, after the Holyoke Savings Bank foreclosed on the original mortgage on the property, the building was transferred to an entity called Marvin Properties. Monte Feinstein, Bennett's son, headed that company.⁸ The company would continue to occupy the building through the rest of the twentieth century.

The successor of American Electric Cable Company -- then called Cubit Wire and Cable Company -- owned the building until 2013 when it ceased production, after which it was sold later that year to a development corporation. The building recently underwent extensive rehabilitation in 2017. It now houses a hospitality and culinary arts institute run by Holyoke Community College, co-working space, and apartments on the upper levels.

Patrick J Kennedy Architect and Builder

Patrick J. Kennedy, Sr. (1845-1929) was born in Ireland in 1860 and immigrating as an infant with his parents. He arrived in Holyoke in 1869 and soon became a prominent contractor. His 1929 obituary noted that "Mr. Kennedy's contracting business was done mostly in road building but he erected several apartment blocks in the city" including one at Franklin and Maple streets. He also acted as Superintendent of Streets between 1911 and 1913.⁹

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MAPS

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- 1870 Beers, Ellis and Sole – Combined Map of Holyoke and Chicopee
- 1877 Bird's Eye View of Holyoke, J. Knauber and Co
- 1881 Bird's Eye View of Holyoke and Village of South Hadley Falls; J.J. Stoner
- 1884 Sanborn
- 1884 George H. Walker Atlas of Holyoke
- 1889 Sanborn
- 1895 Sanborn
- 1911 Richards Standard Atlas of the City of Holyoke
- 1915 Sanborn
- 1949 (1915 rev) Sanborn
- 1956 (1915 rev) Sanborn

² HCRD 1071:352, 1920; "Mill Notes," *American Wool and Cotton Reporter*, March 11, 1920, 1011

³ Mass Department of Public Safety Plans #15839, June 4, 1920. Not retrieved

⁴ "New Building Planned" *Springfield Republican* January 13, 1920, 4

⁵ "To Enlarge Building" *Springfield Republican* September 28, 1921, 7

⁶ "A New Industry." *Springfield Republican* February 22, 1921

⁷ *Springfield Daily News*, January 20, 1922, 18

⁸ "Braiding Company Building Transferred" *Springfield Republican* December 7, 1943; HCRD 1758:551, 1943; 1773:162, 1943

⁹ "P.J. Kennedy, Veteran Road Builder, is Dead" *Springfield Republican* 6/25/1929 via <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/125408537/patrick-j-kennedy>

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View from the Southwest. Photo by Zachary Violette

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View from the Southeast showing rear elevation. Photo by Zachary Violette