BRYANT ELECTRIC COMPANY
1421 State Street
(Bounded east by Organ Street and Howard Avenue, south by Railroad Avenue, west by Hancock Avenue and Lesbia Street and North by State Street)
Bridgeport
Fairfield County
Connecticut

HAER No. CT-155

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Northeast Region
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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UTM Coordinates: USGS Bridgeport, Connecticut Quadrangle, Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:

A	18.650124.4558959	H	18.650059.4558836
B	18.650129.4558908	I	18.649978.4558827
C	18.650184.4558915	J	18.649973.4558865
D	18.650190.4558867	K	18.650036.4558872
E	18.650136.4558859	L	18.650053.4558877
F	18.650148.4558759	M	18.650075.4558879
G	18.650068.4558750	N	18.650068.4558939

Dates of Construction: 1897 to 1968; with episodes of alteration, addition, modification, and demolition

Present Owners: Westinghouse Electric Corporation
Gateway Center
Pittsburgh, PA 15222

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: Electric service to private residences was uncommon when Waldo Calvin Bryant started a company to manufacture and sell wiring devices and electrical hardware in 1880. Bryant invented an "Improved Electric Switch or Cut-Out," and was granted U.S. patent No. 391,943. The company's first product was a switch which encased live electrical contacts and allowed the safe use of electricity in residences. Bryant formed a corporation, The Bryant Electric Company, on October 30, 1888 to capitalize on his invention. The company was acquired by the Westinghouse Electric Corporation in 1901, added a variety of wiring devices to its product line and became a major manufacturer and supplier to the electrical trade.

Project Information: The Connecticut Department of Economic Development has proposed to demolish historic industrial structures which are integral components of the Railroad Avenue Industrial National Register Historic District. The Connecticut Historical Commission concurred that it is not feasible to retain and adaptively reuse the Bryant Electric Company buildings. Recognizing the plant's historic significance, the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) requested, in a letter dated October 20, 1994, that the Department of Economic Development initiate and complete documentation of the historic structure to the professional standards of the National Park Service's Historic American Engineering Record as a mitigating measure prior to demolition of the complex. Copies are to be provided to the Bridgeport West End Industrial Revitalization Project.

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BRIDGEPORT IN CONTEXT

During the period of the American Revolution, the region destined to become Bridgeport was an outlying and sparsely populated section of Stratford known as Newfield. A few English families harvested shellfish and grew salt hay. During the 1790s trade between Connecticut and the West Indies flourished. Livestock, grain, timber and some manufactured goods were exchanged for the rum and sugar of the islands. Newfield attracted merchants, sea captains, sailors and shopkeepers who petitioned the General Assembly for formation of a separate political subdivision. Bridgeport was incorporated as a Borough within the larger town of Stratford in 1800.

As a borough government, Bridgeport could regulate construction, establish a fire department and inspect commercial cargo. The primary tradesmen during this period were ship chandlers, blacksmiths, shoemakers and blacksmiths. Two flour mills were the major business establishments (Resources 1995:56).

As in most of New England, farming was difficult and farmers often combined work in the early manufacturing establishments with agriculture. The average farmer or working man was resourceful and used to solving problems and overcoming a perennial shortage of labor with ingenious contraptions. This created a pool of competent workers who were available when the industrial revolution impacted on New England in the early 19th century. They helped make Connecticut a leader in the American industrial revolution and hardware capital of the world.

Bridgeport fully separated from Stratford as a town in 1821. The town and borough were consolidated in 1836 as the City of Bridgeport. Fabrication of saddles, carriages and garments for the export trade were dominant industries.

By the 1880s Bridgeport's developing industries began to overflow into the West End of the city. The New Haven Railroad offered a means of importing raw materials and shipping finished goods and several companies built factories along the right-of-way. The arrival of industry produced created jobs and a need for workers and residences to house them. A large population of workers moved into the area and housing was built south of Fairfield Avenue and west of Wordin Avenue (Mohylowski 1986).

The area evolved into a dense congested working-class neighborhood housing a sizeable immigrant population. Frame tenements containing two to six dwelling units were characteristic of this part of Bridgeport. A large community of Hungarian immigrants was established just south of the industrial zone where Bryant was located. Bryant transferred a small strip of ground to the Hungarian Reformed Church in 1944 to enable construction of a gymnasium, basketball court and auditorium. The corporate secretary's report states: "that due to the fact that a considerable part of the Hungarian Reformed Church congregation being Bryant Electric Company employees or their relatives, it was desirable to make this conveyance at the nominal

amount of $1.00" (Pomeroy 1944). The area around the Bryant Electric Company also housed Swedes, French-Canadians and Slovenians (Mohylowski 1986)

The area around the Bryant plant was typical of Bridgeport's industrial growth. It had a diverse blend of firms involved in primary metal fabrication as well as shops that could make precision mechanisms. Some companies specialized in mass-produced consumer goods. Around the turn of the century the area housed a typewriter factory, an organ manufacturer, a toymaker, commercial silversmiths, a bronze foundry and metal stamping operations.

BRYANT ELECTRIC COMPANY - GENESIS

Waldo Calvin Bryant was the individual who gave his name to the company. Bryant was born in Winchendon, Massachusetts and learned to be a machinist after completing grade school. Later he attended Cushing Academy and graduated from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute. He worked for Thomson-Houston, the predecessor of the General Electric Corporation, and migrated to Bridgeport where he worked as an engineer in the city electric power station. In 1885 he moved to Waterbury to run a power plant but was soon back in Bridgeport where he opened his electrical service shop.

Most of the work performed in the beginning involved servicing electric time systems and installing arc lights and automatic door bells which rang when someone stepped on a door-mat switch. He hired a secretary and an assistant, Fred Ritchell, and marketed a wooden entrance-box for door bells. The presence of a small manufacturing operation annoyed the other tenants of the bank building and he was obliged to move to a building on John Street.

Bryant's outstanding contribution to the electrical industry was the idea that wiring devices should be standardized. In 1888, for example, there were eight different types of electric light bases. People spent a lot of time looking around for replacement parts to fit their equipment. Bryant was a leader in getting standardized devices accepted by the industry.

Bryant's patent switch was made at the John Street loft. There were seven employees engaged in manufacturing: Charles Ritchell, Edward Bennet, George Flathers, Mark Flather, William Swink, Elsworth Dietz and a Mr. Clark. Some of these employees were still working for the Bryant Electric Company in 1938. Bryant remained with the company as an active manager and technical expert until his death on July 5, 1930. His obituary maintained that he was known as "a friend of the working man" (Bridgeport Post: 3-27-38).

THE AGE OF ELECTRICITY IN CONTEXT

Thomas Edison perfected his incandescent electric lamp in 1879. By September 4, 1882 he had placed a direct-current generating plant in service at 255-257 Pearl Street in New York City (Ahlers et. al. 1970s:4). Low cost electric lighting began to make rapid inroads, replacing kerosine and illuminating gas in the residential and commercial market. This produced

opportunities for a new industry dedicated to making the hardware for installing and using electricity in residences and commercial establishments.

In the larger cities, most home lighting at the time operated on gas, "only the most progressive businesses and sumptuous homes were wired for electricity" according to the Bridgeport Times Star Newspaper. Unlike earlier residential hardware, which generally had only to be designed to meet mechanical and structural requirements, electrical hardware had to carry electrical current safely without overheating. It had to make or break circuits without forming an arc that would damage contacts. The springs and contacts had to retain tension and position throughout numerous operations. The new criteria posed problems for a new generation of design and manufacturing engineers. Bryant Electric was in the forefront in solving these design problems and applying the solutions to the production of electrical hardware.

To take advantage of the new technology a whole range of mechanisms had to be developed. The components needed for an electrical installation were designated as "wiring devices." They included insulated wire, ceramic insulators (knobs and tubes), switches, lampholders, fuses, service entrances and numerous gadgets to adapt gas-light installations to electricity. Early switches were simple "knife" switches which closed and opened the circuit with movement of a copper strip in and out of a spring clip. By design, knife switches had exposed current carrying parts and were considered hazardous. Since the works of a knife switch were exposed it was possible to receive a dangerous shock if the metal components were inadvertently touched. Several inventors patented switches which solved the problem. Many were either impractical or were costly to produce.

Waldo Calvin Bryant, of Waterbury, Connecticut, began developing a safety switch around 1880 (Westinghouse 1950s:3). This activity and the sale of electrical hardware was conducted out of a room over a bank located at Main and Bank Streets in the business center of Bridgeport. On July 2, 1889 the United States Patent Office granted patent No. 391,943 to Bryant for an "Improved Electric Switch or Cut-Out." The patent is included in the supplemental material. Throughout the years the company's engineers continued to be inventive and generated over 500 patents by 1935.

Bryant's invention was a major innovation in switch design and prevented accidental contact with current carrying parts. Because of the safer design, it met with immediate success for the control of residential lighting.

The Bryant Electric Company went to a corporate form in 1889 to capitalize on Bryant's invention.[1] Electric service to the home was in its infancy and the market for high

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[1] There is considerable primary source material on the company in the Bryant Corporate Archives. See Sources of Information.

quality electric wiring devices was extensive. With capital from shareholders Bryant planned to buy machinery needed to mass produce the switch and other products. Bryant and his associates filed "Articles of Association" with the Connecticut Secretary of State on July 3, 1889; this was the genesis of the Bryant Electric Company. Officers of the company were Levi W. Eaton, President, E.W. Marsh, Vice President and Harry A. Hubbell, Secretary. Bryant served as Treasurer and Manager. The stated purpose of the venture was to:

> "manufacture and sell electrical supplies, to operate the Warner System of Standard Electric Time, to sell electric plants and generally to exercise and enjoy the powers specified in Section 1906 of the General Statutes..."(Articles 1889:1).

The Company was capitalized at $5000, divided into 200 shares, with W.C. Bryant and I. Bryant owning 50 shares each. Other stockholders were E.L. Clark with 75 shares and H.C. Clark with 25 shares (Articles 1889:2). A Carrie A. Seeley was also listed as a backer but there is no information on Seeley's investment.

Relations with the Clarks were difficult from the start. They apparently viewed the company as a distributorship rather than a manufacturing concern. Eaton, Marsh and Hubbell backed Bryant in 1890 when he was opposed by the other investors in a plan to expand and move to a larger building. The principals bought out the dissenters and rented a converted schoolhouse, located on the site of the present Bryant plant shown in the location maps, for $16.00 per month. The schoolhouse was originally owned by P.T. Barnum, the circus celebrity (Bryant News 1992: 2-4). Eventually, Bryant bought the property from the Barnum estate.

The company grew rapidly and acquired the Standard Electric Time Company and the Empire China Works in 1890, thus initiating a company commitment to vertical integration. By manufacturing, rather than purchasing, most of the components that went into the products, quality control was improved and delivery of needed materials was assured.

Demand for wiring devices increased as more and more households discovered the convenience of electricity. Bryant was unable to produce enough product to satisfy demand. The company purchased the Paiste switch line in 1892 to help fill orders. These were switches built on a porcelain base and featured decorative finishes that were popular with homeowners.

The company built two wood frame factory buildings and a new brick power house adjoining the old schoolhouse. A "bird's-eye" view of the plant dated 1901-1902 is included in the section on graphic documentation (Bryant News 1992: 2-5).

The expanding market for switches led to the purchase of the Perkins Electric Switch Company of Hartford on December 30, 1899. John B. Hubbell and Henry B. Hubbell were

added to the board of directors of the consolidated company (Hooker 1899:1) and the Perkins plant and employees relocated to Bridgeport.

Bryant published its first major catalog, "Electrical Specialties for Incandescent Lighting," on July 1, 1892 Bryant News 1992: 2-4). Within ten years of founding the company the product line had expanded from eight items to over one hundred. The 1898 catalog was 128 pages long and included products for lighting control, socket switches and lamp fixture components. Lamp sockets were available in twenty different finishes[2]. A screw-in threaded contactor or "attachment plug" was developed to adapt lampholders for supplying power to appliances. The electrical control branch of the business was consisted of surface mounted wall switches for turning power on and off. Bryant produced a line of threaded pipe attachments and fixture brackets that enabled pipes installed for supplying gas lamps to support new electric lamp fixtures. For the new wiring market Bryant produced terminal blocks, wire connectors and switch fuse boxes (Bryant News 1992:2, 2). Bryant engineers developed innovative ways of assembling wiring devices. The fluted section of a lampholder that holds its protective shell sections together was a Bryant development. The threaded section of a lampholder shell used for attaching the lampshade also came from Bryant. Prior to these modifications, manufacturers used various clamps and screws, making interchange impossible (Westinghouse 1938:4) Bryant prospered and new sales offices were opened in East Liverpool, Ohio and Montreal, Canada. A western office and factory was opened in Chicago.

The Bryant Electric Company encouraged customers to use the telegraph for "ordering goods, requesting quotations and information relative to the shipment of orders." Bryant introduced a code book to allow the sender to communicate long messages for the price of a short telegram. The system expanded but by the 1920s was supplanted by telephone communications (Bryant News 1992: 2-4).[3]

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[2] The first use of the word receptacle denoted porcelain surface mounted lampholders. The first Bryant "Attachment Plugs" were introduced in 1892. The attachment plug let a user connect an appliance to a wall mounted lamp fixture. In operation, the incandescent lamp would be unscrewed and a device with a threaded base attached on to a cylindrical wooden handle would be screwed into the lamp socket. Two twisted wires passed through the wood handle and carried power to the appliance, heater or table lamp. This type of plug remained in Bryant's product line until the 1950s. The Chapman "disappearing door" receptacle and plug was introduced in 1895. The unique feature of this device was that it was designed to be recessed for flush mounting. It made available "recessed convenience outlets" that could be located closer to the appliances and blended in with any decor better than surface mounted white porcelain devices. (Bryant News 1992: 2-2).

[3] In the code book words were assigned to seven business transaction categories: General, Regarding Orders, Inquiries Regarding Shipments, Replies Regarding Shipments, Inquiries Regarding Prices, Credit and Finance. For instance, under 'Inquires Regarding Shipments', the

The business grew rapidly and was in need of more capital for expanding the plant and purchasing more equipment. Bryant turned to George Westinghouse and proposed a merger. Westinghouse saw this as an opportunity for both companies. Westinghouse's growing appliance business needed the components that Bryant could make. Bryant's capitalization grew from $2500 in 1888 to $250,000 in 1901. On April 10, 1901, Westinghouse purchased Bryant for $875,000 with $50,000 to be paid at the signing and the balance to be paid in equal installments. The final payment was made in October of 1902. Westinghouse agreed that Bryant and Eaton would stay on as directors of Bryant Electric and Perkins Switch. The agreement prohibited them from association with any competitive business for 25 years. Bryant's salary was set at $7000 per year plus royalties on his patents. The agreement was confidential and the merged company was operated as a wholly owned subsidiary, kept the Bryant name, officers and location. The reason for downplaying the Westinghouse connection was to keep Bryant distributors who had exclusive franchises to sell Westinghouse's competitors products, from dropping the Bryant product line (Bryant News 1992:2, 1).

The company continued to prosper and for a time was the largest employer in the City of Bridgeport. In 1910 it published a new catalog in a larger format which illustrated the complete product line. Perkins' products consisted of surface mounted switches, pull switches, fused panel switches, automotive switches, key switches, automatic door switches, wall plates, recessed push button switches and accessories. The Bryant line included knife switches and service entrance fused switches (Bryant News 1992: 3-1).

By 1912 recessed push button switches were the big volume sellers. Product line expansion continued with the addition of pilot-light combination switches and heater controls. The heater switch was unique because it allowed graduated control from simmer heat to fry heat giving the electric stove the same flexibility as the gas range. A fused panel switch was aimed at the control panel original equipment manufacturer's (OEM) market. The line expanded into the service entrance market with plug fuses, fuses, contacts and specialized tools. The factory encompassed 200,000 square feet making it "the largest plant in the world devoted exclusively to the manufacture of wiring devices." The warehouse held 3.25 million components in inventory to service a nationwide network of distributors. The tremendous growth of the industry in this period was recognized by Bryant's listing of twenty-nine competitors in its catalog (Bryant News 1992: 3-1).

As the electrical industry grew, safer house wiring techniques evolved and standard practice evolved to conceal electrical wiring within walls and partitions. By 1916, flush switches and receptacles were the rule. Bryant developed appliance plugs for toasters and irons,

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code word "Healthful" was code for "By what route did you ship our order?" The code "Hazard" meant "How soon can you ship?" Thirty to fifty word coded messages could be sent for the price of a ten word telegram. By 1910 the code contained words for 1547 devices. To order two screw plug flush receptacles the customer transmitted "Reisetrupp Opgekrast"

rotary range switches, circuit breakers and the "Spartan"[4] line of plugs having bladed contacts and receptacles to match. The bladed plugs replaced the threaded plugs and became an industry standard in the United States and Canada. The "Sentinel Breaker" was developed to combine control and overload protection for motors and appliances. In addition to supplying distributors, Bryant supplied Westinghouse appliance manufacturing plants with parts and wiring devices (Bryant News 1992: 3-3).

The development of plastics in the use of wiring devices brought about the acquisition of the Hemco plastics Company in 1928. This facility acted as a feeder division to supply plastic parts to the wiring device plant and produced custom moldings, plastic dinnerware and housewares. As improved plastic compounds were developed, materials were switched over from the earlier Bakelite materials to nylon for plugs and connectors and melamine for receptacles.

Bryant pioneered in developing reflectors and light diffusers made of plastic. These ranged from four inches to twenty-three inches in diameter and were lightweight and shatter resistant (Weaver 1938:9)

Plastic articles manufactured by Bryant went under the name of Hemcoware, Safetyware or Hemcoplas and were sold in chain and department stores. The volume of plastic dinnerware was about 22 million pieces annually. The dinnerware was popular because it was lightweight, nested to save space and often decorated with Disney characters to enhance appeal. The company utilized sandblasting, silk-screening and decalcomanias to decorate the dinnerware.

The plastics division also did custom molding and produced the cups used on Thermos bottles, ash trays, handles for appliances, casings for Remington electric shavers, radio cases for Westinghouse and RCA and plastic parts for the Dictaphone Corporation (Westinghouse 1938:9). The plastics operation supplied the wiring device division with over 15 million pieces per year in the 1930s. It functioned both as an independent operator and as an in-house supplier Weaver 1938:9). Dinnerware manufacturing was discontinued in 1961.

By 1938 the plant had over 500,000 square feet of space. The plant was appraised at $1,622,000 and paid $50,000 in property taxes to the City of Bridgeport. There were over 2000 items in the catalog. The plant turned out 38 million wiring devices and 49 million plastic items. 1537 people were employed and the payroll totaled $2,000,000. Bryant spent about $2,500,000 purchasing parts and services from other Bridgeport firms (Bridgeport Post: 3-27-38). A Byrant statistical profile dated 1938 and an inventory of material in the Bryant archives is included in the supplemental material.

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[4] "Spartan" was a coined word derived from a description of connecting blade configuration on plugs. Plugs could have either parallel (par) vertical, or tandem (tan) horizontal metal blades.

During World War 11 Bryant converted much of its manufacturing capacity to the production of war materiel. Westinghouse torpedoes were equipped with control units made by Bryant and accounted for 170 enemy ship sinkings. The control unit was a complex electro-mechanical assembly which consisted of directional and depth rudder sub-assemblies. A gyroscope starting and spinning mechanism kept the torpedo on a pre-set course. Depth and directional control setting mechanisms were a form of programmable device which allowed the submarine commander to direct the torpedo's course. As an example of mass production, Bryant's screw machine department turned out millions of bullet cores for 35 calibre machine gun bullets. The company earned a reputation for on-time delivery.

The post-war period was a time of painful adjustment for Bryant and many other Bridgeport companies. Wages and prices had been frozen during the war. However, there was considerable overtime available and workers were needed to make up for men and women serving in the military. Generally, workers were prosperous but few goods were available for purchase. When price and wage controls were lifted the nation experienced a wave of strikes in major industries. A strike, primarily against Westinghouse, was ended on May 10, 1946, with the workers gaining an 18% wage increase. 1600 workers returned to work at Bryant (Bridgeport Telegraph: 5-10-46). There were strikes in October of 1955 and May of 1956 (Bridgeport Post: 10-31-55; 5-22-56). In spite of the strikes, there was a boom in residential construction and housing development as builders rushed to fulfill pent-up housing demand.

In 1961 Bryant entered the load center and circuit breaker market.[5] In 1966 Westinghouse transferred production of electric heating equipment from its Staunton Division to Bryant. The company spent $1,500,000 between 1966 and 1968 to modernize and build new facilities for load center and electric heater manufacture (Bridgeport Post: 7-6-66). Mortgage interest rates were low during this period and Byrant benefited from the booming housing market although there were layoffs in November of 1974. Construction picked up again in 1976 and in June, Bryant hired 78 new workers.

The climate for business in Connecticut changed during the 1980s. High taxes, the cost of energy, militant unions and environmental regulations contributed to the flight of manufacturing firm from the northeast. Other areas of the country and the world offered incentives to relocate. Byrant was handicapped by an aging plant which could not be adapted to modern manufacturing practice. Westinghouse Electric Corporation announced that the Bryant plant in Bridgeport would close in 1988 and production facilities moved to Ashville, North Carolina; Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic (Bridgeport Post: 2-1-87).

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[5] Load centers are sturdy steel boxes which contain terminal strips and circuit breakers. They are the central point from which power is controlled and distributed to secondary circuits in the system.

Major layoffs occurred in April and December of 1987 followed by strikes. By April 23, 1988, 165 workers were laid off and most production at the plant stopped. 60 workers remained to shut down the plant and move the machinery to the new plants. One worker summed up the feeling: "It's lousy. There's no jobs in the city anymore. I can go out and get work, but for a lot of other people, its going to be hard" (Bridgeport Post: 4-23-1988).

THE BRYANT ELECTRIC COMPANY'S FACTORY - ARCHITECTURE

The main Bryant Electric Company complex was built between 1896 and 1964. It occupies most of the city block bounded by Railroad Avenue on the South, Organ Street on the East, State Street on the North and Hancock Avenue on the West. A building which housed the injection molding and shipping docks occupies the center of the block east of Organ Street. A large garage, boiler room and air compressor station is located in the middle of the block west of Hancock Street. A complete list of Bryant buildings is included in the supplemental material.

The most prominent section of the complex consists of five separate buildings, dating from 1897 to 1920. The oldest portion of the structure is building 7. It extends the length of Organ Street from State Street to Railroad Avenue and is 650 feet long and 60 feet deep. The northern half of the building is four stories high while the portion closest to Railroad Avenue is three stories in height. Building 18 seamlessly abuts building 7 and runs along the north side of Railroad Avenue forming the southern boundary of the site. It was built in 1916 and is about 140 feet long and 56 feet deep.

Building 18 is abutted on the west by building 21, built in 1920. Building 21 runs northerly along Hancock Avenue for 218 feet. It is 58 feet wide. Building 15, was built in 1910 abutting building 21 to the north. It is 60 feet long and 154 feet deep. Building 29 is immediately north of building 15. It was completed in 1968 and replaced several earlier buildings including a steam plant and buildings 10, 12 and 16. It has 130 feet of frontage on Hancock Avenue and is 160 feet deep. Set back from the street, fronting on the only portion of the block not owned by Bryant Electric, is building 33 which is about 100 feet long by 100 feet deep.

Building 23, built in 1920, has frontage of 127 feet on State Street, is 60 feet deep and joins with building 7. Building 28 is located in the southeast corner of the enclosure formed by the other buildings. It abuts building 7 to the east and building 18 to the south. The internal courtyard is also the location of projecting towers that house stairwells, toilet rooms, elevator shafts and vaults. Receiving platforms and a transformer vault are also included within this area.

Bridges connect building 7 to building 24 across Organ Street and to building 15 across the internal courtyard (Bedford 1995:1). The exterior of the complex appears as an architectural

unity, creating an image of a vast Romanesque revival style structure. The predominant material on the exterior is load-bearing brick laid in a simple running bond. The mortar is colored to match the brick.

The raised basement and the tapering exterior walls are pierced at the basement level by 6/6 double hung sash, while curved gauged brick softens the visual transition from pier to window. The window heads of the basement level are united by a stone water table that has its upper edge eased. This water table runs around the building, only to be terminated at the building corners, whose importance is expressed by three-story-high corner pilasters.

The first floor is delineated by trabeated openings that are articulated by stone heads and sills. The original sash has been replaced with smaller modern windows and insulated inserts. The floor is visually terminated by a stone string course that also forms and unites the window sills of the second floor. As in the case of the water table this course is only terminated by the projecting corner pilasters.

The second and third floors are treated as a unified composition. The fenestration of each bay of the two floors is articulated as a jack arch, while the intervening spandrel between the floors is recessed to reflect that unity. The second floor windows are topped by individual stone headers, while the third floor windows have individual stone sills and the headers are the brick jack arches. In most parts of the complex, this floor is terminated by another string course that unifies the sill of the windows of the fourth floor. However, not all the buildings have a fourth floor. Only buildings 21, 18, and 23 have a fourth floor running their full length, while this upper floor extends only half way down Organ Street on building 7. This string course consists of a stone course surmounting a brick course dentil course (Bedford 1995:2).

The fourth floor is the most elaborate of all the floors. Rising from the string course, each bay is articulated as a brick Romanesque arch, complete with simple pilaster capitals at the arch springing, gauged brick voussoirs, and a complex hood molding built up from molded or gauged brick. This arcade is topped by a cornice of brick machicoulations that form the roof parapet. This parapet consists of a stone string course, a few courses of brick and glazed terra cotta parapet caps. On the southern side of the building this parapet rises for 2 bays, forming an unadorned hypethral base. On the buildings where there is no fourth floor the machicoulated parapet simply tops the third floor. The southern termination of the fourth floor on building 7 and the eastern termination of the fourth floor of building 18 are not brick faced. They are covered in galvanized steel stamped to have the appearance of brick.

On the elevations of the interior courtyard the locations and type of fenestration match their external counterparts, but are much less elaborate, lacking stone string courses and machicoulated parapets. However most of the original 12/12 double hung sash is preserved. In addition, the courtyard also has a 2 story bridge, covered in corrugated galvanized metal. This connects building 15 to building 7. It is illuminated by a pair of 6/6 windows at each level. There is also a small loading dock on the southern side of building 15.

This internal courtyard is reached via a passageway that runs through building 21. The floor over the passageway is supported by built-up H-sections. Adjacent to it is a modern aluminum and glass door that served as the employee's entrance. The Personnel department and Security office were housed at this entryway. The entrance to the executive offices was at the corner of State and Organ Streets. The entrance is articulated by a stepped, exposed aggregate concrete surround.

Since this was a factory building, there are few interior partitions, although, although full and partial partitioned offices are found throughout the building. The interior has been stripped, leaving virtually no historic finishes. Panelled doors remain in some toilet entries and offices. There are modern finishes and dropped ceilings in the fourth floor of building 7 and some wood and metal baseboard remains in the office portion of building 23 (Bedford 1995:4).

The most recent addition to the complex occurred in 1968 when buildings 29 and 33 were added. These are purely utilitarian, modern factory buildings. They are constructed of cinder block and steel sheathing over a steel frame. There are no windows in these buildings. The buildings are contiguous and no interior wall separates them. Building 29 was used for fabricating load center housings. These are medium sized, heavy steel boxes which required mechanized press brakes and heavy punch presses in their formation. The heavier models were moved, inserted and extracted from the presses with robotic arms during the last few years of the plant's operation. Building 33 accommodated the facilities for forming and assembling electric baseboard heating units (personal communication, Al Salamanca, 3/3/95).

FACTORY FORM AND FUNCTION

The Bryant Electric Company's buildings display decorative treatments, primarily Romanesque-inspired heavy corbels and a round-arched arcade. The design reflects the optimism and confidence of late 19th century businessmen, the buildings project an image of prosperity and stability. The design makes a statement that products made in this factory were also solid and built to last.

The Bryant buildings are examples of "slow-burn" construction which was used in nearly all interior elements. This construction technology was developed for textile mills in the early 19th century and features heavy wood posts and beams. A double layer of thick floor planks is laid directly on the beams, no joists are used. Experience with this construction showed that the flat bottom of a thick floor plank was less likely to catch fire than a narrow downward-projecting joist edge. The ends of the beams rest on small shoulders or pockets in the outside walls but are not tied into the walls. If the beams burned through and collapsed the outside shell would remain standing. Slow-burn construction minimized loss in the event of fire. Insurance underwriters encouraged the use of this construction well into the 1930s. It was an effective, yet less costly, alternative to reinforced concrete (Historic 1984:33).

TECHNOLOGY

By 1924 the period of explosive growth and rapid technological change had moderated. Bryant was a mature business enterprise with a factory capable of supplying high quality wiring devices to a world-wide network of jobbers and dealers. The factory was housed in fourteen buildings having 266,257 square feet of manufacturing space and 30,799 square feet of office space. Manufacturing equipment included automatic blanking presses, molding presses, injection molders, screw machines, forming presses, tapping machines, electroplating and finishing facilities including Japanning and lacquering. A paint shop and a blacksmith shop supported plant maintenance work. Power was supplied from a steam plant and pump room (Westinghouse 1938).

The typical Bryant wiring device was an inexpensive, yet complex mechanism. For example, a pull-chain lamp socket was made up of thirty-three separate parts and required ninety-two distinct operations to manufacture and assemble. The parts had to fit together within tight tolerance limits and the socket had to comply with the standards of the Underwriters Laboratories and the National Electrical Code. There were four main socket types: pull, keyless, key and push button. The socket bases could be made of porcelain or bakelite. The sockets were enclosed in either brass, with three types of fasteners, or bakelite or porcelain shells. Several sizes were also available. With all the variables, production management had to keep track of thousands of small parts and maintain sufficient inventory of all components to minimize production delays.

There were over 500 varieties of switch available in the 1930s. The current-carrying capacity of a switch was a major variable. Product lines were priced to compete in several markets. Switch types included flush tumbler, push-button, ceiling, rotary-snap, cord-switch and pendant. Switches made for electric ranges had to comply with special requirements for heat resistance and high current ratings (Weaver 1938:8). In 1935 Bryant introduced a new line of surface wiring. The "AddHere" system allowed the addition of new outlets to power a growing number of appliances without tearing out existing walls and partitions. Pre-wired molding was simply glued to the wall. Outlets could be placed at any point on the molding.

In the last few years of operation in Bridgeport, Bryant developed electronic sensors and produced receptacles which would detect minute current leakage to ground and interrupt the power. These "ground fault" receptacles are required for use in bathrooms and for outside areas. Another innovative switch in the current catalog detects motion in a room and turns the lights on.

Most of the wiring devices were assembled by women who were paid on a piece-work basis. The work required small hands, dexterous fingers and the patience to do repetitive work.

The manufacture of thousands of small parts to exacting tolerances required a substantial investment and inventory of specialized jigs, fixtures and tooling. Tool and die

design was a major production engineering function. Most tools and dies were made by outside job shops but Bryant maintained some machine shop capability to modify tooling in-house. Bryant maintained a process planning department to track production and develop operations manuals (op sheets) with the particular assembly directions for each product. Bryant was and continues to be an innovative leader in developing wiring devices and original manufacturing methods to make quality parts to high tolerances at low prices.

The Bryant plant was built at the beginning of the age of electrical power. No evidence of overhead belt and pulley power transmission systems were found in the plant. Machinery was generally operated with electric motors. The original steam plant built in 1899 was demolished when buildings 29 and 33 were built in 1968 to house load center manufacturing and electric heater fabrication. Steam was provided from a pair of package boilers which were set up in building 32 adjacent to the garage on Hancock Avenue. Steam lines ran through a tunnel under Hancock Avenue to the main complex.

CONCLUSION

Bryant's major markets traditionally have been in new commercial and residential construction, maintenance, building expansion and OEM products. It continues to be a major supplier of fluorescent lampholders and high quality, mass produced wiring devices (Bryant 1970:1). Westinghouse sold the Bryant Electric Company division to Hubbell, Inc., in March 1991.

The history of the Bryant Electric Company and its place in the chronicles of Bridgeport is a vital part of the history of industrial Connecticut. It is an illustration of how an area, not blessed with good conditions for agriculture could become a major industrial power. Connecticut starting with the manufacture of tinware and clocks and progressed to the mass production of guns, sewing machines and bicycles. These earlier industries formed the industrial base and technical genesis of the wiring device industry. This new hardware combined the manufacturing technology of mechanical devices with additional somewhat cryptic requirements for controlling electricity. A modern industry was created and Bryant was positioned to take advantage of an expanding market. By insisting on standardization of wiring devices, Bryant benefitted the consumer and probably accelerated the acceptance and installation of electrical power in residences.

The story demonstrates creativity, inventiveness, ingenuity, ambition, hard work and success. It is also the account of immigrant labor, piece work, solidarity, strikes and changing economic times. It documents the negative effect of taxation and government over-regulation on manufacturing in the northeast. The relocation of Bryant's manufacturing facilities was probably inevitable, given the financial advantages of operation elsewhere.

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185 Plains Road
Milford, Connecticut 06460

Supplemental Material

Bryant Electric Company Buildings in Bridgeport, Connecticut

Original Document Location: Bryant Corporate Archives

No.	Description	Location	Constructed
1	2 Story Frame	State St.	Replaced by #3
2	3 Story Frame - Manufacturing	State St.	Replaced by #23
3	2 Story Frame	State St.	Replaced by #7
4	Brick Power House & Pump Room	Yard	1899-1901
5	1 Story Frame - Carpenter Shop	Yard	Destroyed
6	Brick Boiler House	Yard	1899-1901
	Alteration-Boiler Room		1910
7	3 & 4 Story Brick	Organ St.	
	Frame Structure		1897
	Brick Structure		1902
	Brick Addition		1903
	Brick Addition		1907
	Office Addition		1908
	Entrance Addition		1909
	Office Addition		1911
	Brick Basement Addition		1911
	3 Story Brick Addition		1912
	Office Addition		1916
	Model Room, etc. Addition		1918
8	Frame Shed		Destroyed
9	Frame Watchman's Shed		Destroyed
10	1 Story Brick - Plate & Buffing	Hancock Ave.	1903
11	1 Story Brick - Japan Room		Destroyed
12	Brick - Plate & Lacquer Shop	Hancock Ave.	1906

No.	Description	Location	Constructed
13	Frame Storage Shed		Destroyed
14	Brick Chimney	Yard	1910
15	Brick Storage Building	Hancock Ave.	1910
16	Brick finishing Building 1st. Story - Inspection 2nd Story - Personnel	Hancock Ave.	 1912 1916
17	Frame Storage Shed		Destroyed
18	3 Story Brick Building	Railroad Ave.	1916
19	Frame Scale House		Destroyed
20	1 Story Brick - Transformer House		
21	4 Story Brick Building	Hancock Ave.	1920
22	Brick Garage	Hancock Ave.	1920
23	4 Story Brick - Mfg. & Office	State Street	1920
24	4 Story Brick Building Packing, Shipping & Storage	Organ Street	1923
25	1 Story Brick - Paint Shop	Hancock Ave.	1923
26	1 Story Brick - Blacksmith Shop	Yard	1923
28	1 Story Brick - Electroplating	Yard	1960s
29	3 Story cinderblock/steel	Hancock Ave.	1968
31	1 Story Brick-Wastewater Treatment	Yard	1960s
32	1 Story Brick-Power House	Hancock Ave.	1920-64
33	2 Story cinderblock/steel	Yard	1968

Supplemental Material
Patent No. 391,943 To Waldo C. Bryant
Source: U.S. Patent Office

(No Model.) 2 Sheets—Sheet 1.

W. C. BRYANT.

ELECTRIC SWITCH OR CUT-OUT.

No. 391,943. Patented Oct. 30, 1888.

Fig. 1.

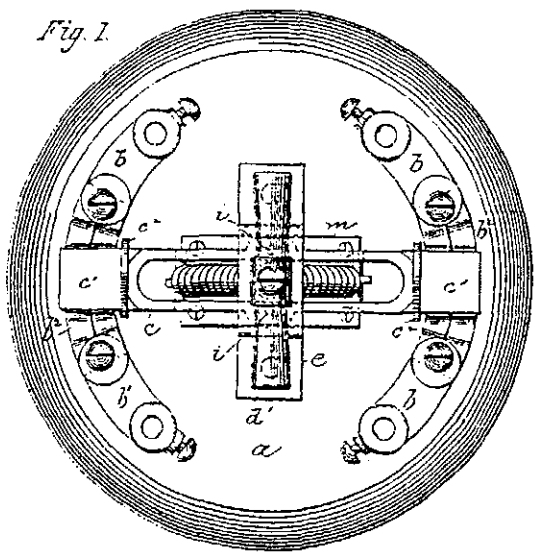
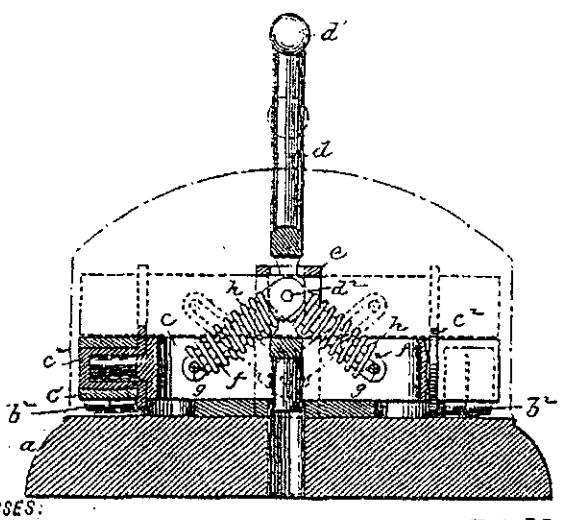


Fig. 2.



WITNESSES:
Raymond L. Barney.
Wm. A. Rosenbaum.

INVENTOR.
Waldo C. Bryant.
BY W. D. Johnston.
ATTORNEY.

Patent No. 391,943 To Waldo C. Bryant
Source: U.S. Patent Office

(No Model.) 2 Sheets—Sheet 2.

W. C. BRYANT.

ELECTRIC SWITCH OR CUT-OUT.

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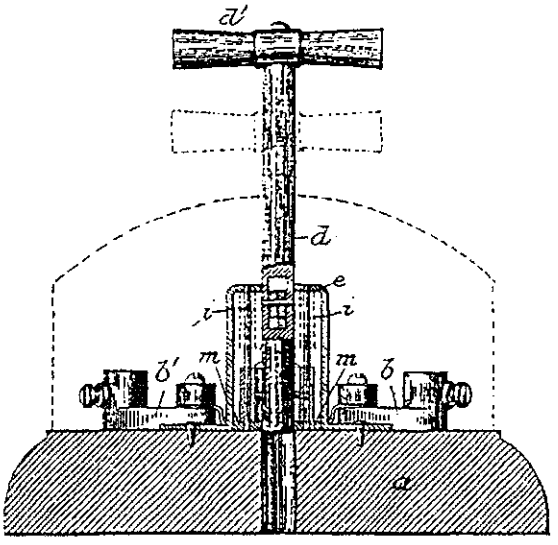


Fig. 7.

Witnesses.
G. W. Tauberschmidt.
H. M. Shackleford.

Inventor.
W. C. Bryant.
By his Attorney
H. J. Johnston.

Patent No. 391,943 To Waldo C. Bryant
Source: U.S. Patent Office

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

WALDO C. BRYANT, OF WATERBURY, CONNECTICUT.

ELECTRIC SWITCH OR CUT-OUT.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 391,943, dated October 30, 1888.

Application filed June 20, 1888. Serial No. 277,352. (No model.)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, WALDO C. BRYANT, a citizen of the United States, residing in Waterbury, county of New Haven, and State of Connecticut, have invented a certain new and useful Improvement in Electric Switches or Cut-Outs; and I do hereby declare that the following is a full, clear, and exact description of my invention, such as will enable others skilled in the art to which it appertains to make and use the same.

My invention relates to electric switches or cut-outs, with particular reference to that class of switch in which the contact-piece has a motion through a certain distance independent of the handle, the said motion being controlled by a spring or weight. This form of switch is familiarly known as the "snap-switch," and its function is to prevent the formation of a destructive "arc" when the current is interrupted.

In general, the switch which I have invented consists of a movable bar or contact-piece the whole movement of which is controlled by a power independent of the handle. The handle has a longitudinal motion and its function is simply to change the position of a pair of springs, so as to make their line of force coincide with the direction of movement of the contact-bar.

The invention is illustrated in the accompanying drawings, in which—

Figure 1 is a plan of the device, and Fig. 2 a vertical section. Fig. 3 is a vertical section taken at right angles to section shown in Fig. 2.

The device is a double pole-switch.

a represents the base, and *b b* and *b' b'* the binding-posts of the two lines. The contact-brushes *b'* are attached to each of them, and are bent upward with their faces opposite each other and slightly flaring to admit the circuit-closing bar, as will be set forth.

c represents the circuit-closing bar. At each end it is provided with a metallic block, *c'*, which is insulated from the intermediate portion of the bar *c²*, representing the insulating-piece. The bar has a longitudinal opening or slot through which passes a thrust and draw rod, *d*, having a suitable handle or cross-head, *d'*. This rod moves through a guiding-frame, *e*, and is adapted to slide in a central perforation in the base *a*. The motion of the rod is therefore a reciprocating one. The rod has pivoted to it at the point *d²* a pair of links, *f f*. These links are slotted at their outer ends, as shown, and through the slots pass pins *g*, which are arranged transversely in the opening of the bar.

h h are coil-springs surrounding the links and resting against the pins *g* and shoulders on the inner ends of the links. These springs are put in under tension.

In Fig. 2 the position of the circuit-closing bar is shown down—that is, holding the circuit closed. Now it will be readily seen that by forcing the rod *d* down the spring *h* will be compressed by reason of the shortening of the distance between pins *g* and the pivot *d²*, and when the said pivot reaches a position below the line of the pins *g* the power which has been stored in the springs will be exerted in an upward direction against the pins and force the circuit-closing bar upward with a quick movement into the position shown in dotted lines. By withdrawing the rod the same result takes place, only in an opposite direction. The pivot *d²* is pulled to a point above pins *g*, and the springs then force the circuit-closing bar downward with a quick movement.

Referring to Fig. 1, there is shown in dotted lines two pins, *i i*, which are fixed at their upper ends into the frame *e*, and at the lower ends into the base *a*, or a plate, *m*, secured to the base. The circuit-closing bar is provided with perforations through which these pins pass, and the said bar slides upon them when making its movements. These pins serve to hold the bar rigid and prevent any vibration or warping.

The whole device is covered, as shown in Fig. 2 in dotted line. It will thus be seen that I have provided a snap-switch which may be operated by a pull and push, rather than a rotary movement. This is in many instances desirable.

Having now described my invention, what I claim is—

1. In an electric switch or cut-out, the combination, with a movable circuit-controlling bar and the circuit-terminals, of a reciprocating rod or handle and a pair of springs, both of which are connected with the rod at the

Patent No. 391,943 To Waldo C. Bryant
Source: U.S. Patent Office

same point thereon and with the bar, the point of connection with the rod being normally out of line with the points of connection with the bar, substantially as described.

2. In an electric switch or cut-out, the combination, with the movable circuit-controlling bar and the circuit-terminals, and a manually-operated reciprocating element, of a pair of springs, said springs being each connected at one of their ends with said circuit-controlling bar, and at their other ends with said reciprocating element, whereby a movement of the reciprocating element will effect a change in the direction of force of the springs with respect to the circuit-controlling bar, substantially as described.

3. The combination, with the movable circuit-controlling bar, of a reciprocating rod, a pair of links pivoted to the rod and to the said bar, the point of connection with the rod being out of line with the points of connection with the bar, and springs supported upon the links and exerting their force against the rod and the said bar, as described.

In witness whereof I have hereunto affixed my name in the presence of two subscribing witnesses.

WALDO C. BRYANT.

Witnesses:
NATHANIEL R. BRONSON,
GEO. B. TERRY.

Supplemental Material

INVENTORY OF BRYANT ELECTRIC CORPORATE ARCHIVES

185 Plains Road, Milford, CT 06460; Archivist: James Noonan
Reviewed April 1995, Cece Saunders.

Date	Approximate Count	Description
Land Ownership/Buildings/Construction		
1891-1939	1 file	City of Bridgeport (Government) Building Permits issued by Board of Building Commissioners
19-20th C.	19 Files	Deed Surveys, Building Blue Prints, Insurance Maps including: complete real estate transactions/purchases of #72, 78-80, 88, and 96 Organ Street; 1926 contracts with The Metropolitan Wrecking Co.; 1900 letter between W. C. Bryant and P.T. Barnum Office; contract specifications of 1896 original building; correspondence with multiple bidders for construction projects over the years; notice to Gould Bros. (#115-119 John Street) of acceptance of bid; 4/04 correspondence with Stirling Consolidated Boiler Co. re: installation of A & T Horizontal Boiler; 1898 purchases from Berlin Iron Bridge Co., "Boiler House Roof" and floor and other materials
1930	1 file	Building and Land Ownership
Photograph Files		
20th C.	2 files	Photos, product line: no date/no i.d. Product Distribution Maps
20th C.	1 file	Photos, product testing: no date/no i.d.
20th C.	2 files	Photos, production: no date, worker identification on rear of photograph
20th C.	multiple	Hemco/Plastics Division, including production photographs/building plans

1938	1 file	Photos, product line: no date/no i.d.
1890+	1 portfolio	Historic photographs, including photostatic copies of some of the earliest organization papers/stationary orders/patent and catalog illustrations
1940s	1 file	"War Effort" black and white photos, including diagrams on Bryant Control Units used in torpedoes
1945	1 file	Black and white photographs of veteran patients using BE-donated fuses as part of hospital/convalescent therapy

Displays/Framed and Unframed Memorabilia

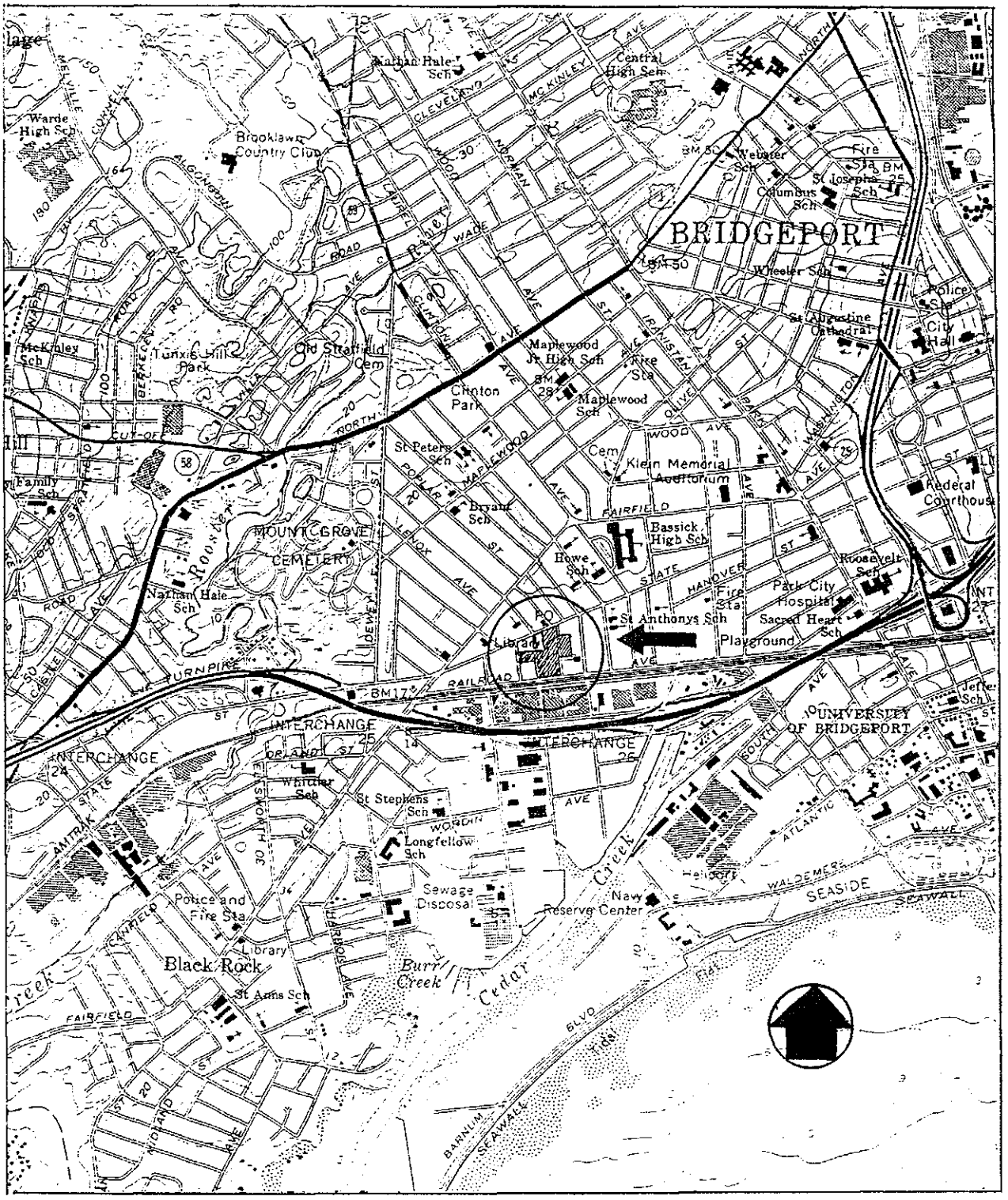
1888	1 sheet	Photostat of 11/10/1888 check for $16; Rent paid to CT National Bank by Bryant, rent of "office No. 20", 1 month
1889	1	Invoice from Bridgeport Farmer for advertising Articles of Association
early 20th C.	1 wooden	Mounted product display board (approx. 2' x 3')
20th C.	22 pieces	Black and white mounted or framed historic photos/large format
early 20th C.	small	Early products and patent papers in locked display glass fronted display cases in corporate case halls
mid 20th C.	1 scrapbook	corporate newspaper/internal publication
1956	1 script	Script from industrial movie, "Somebody Loves Me"
1959-	4 volumes	"Westinghouse News" issues, bound, 1964 including Bryant E. articles
20th C.	2 crates	Two bronze commemorative plaques removed from cornerstones of Hancock Street vehicular entrance/packed in wooden crates measuring 45"x35"x5"

Business Reports/Papers/Contracts/Government Filings

1905	1 set	Annual Meeting Minutes
1896	1 set	Loan Agreement, between W. C. Bryant and H. A. Hubbell
1898	1 set	Notice of stockholders meeting
20th C.	multiples	Stock certificates
20th C.	multiples	Certificates of Deposit
1905	3 sets	Agreements between Westinghouse (owning and controlling stock in Perkins Electric) and Bryant Electric
1889	1 set	CT Sec. of State, Certificate of Organization 1/28/04-
3/3/26	1 series	Minutes of Meeting of Board of Directors
19th C.-	multiple	Receivables Ledger 20th C.
1895	1 set	Directors Meeting to acquire, outright, land and buildings from Eaton
1889-	1 book	Stock Certifieate Issue Book 1890
1896-	1 book	Stock Certificate Issue Book 1958
20th C.	5 files	Foreign Patent agreements (Canada, France, Belgium, Great Britain, Germany)
1919	multiple	Schedule B (patent) Agreements, expiration
1891-	1 series	State of CT Corporate Reports 1937
1919-	multiple	Collection of Patent Royalty claims/correspondence regarding many products, including Lamp Socket and canopy switches; with various companies including (1928) General Electric and (1925) Hart & Hegeman, Hubbell, and General Electric

1911-	portfolio	Foreign Trade Mark registrations: 1934 - 1 file per country, illustrations of numerous trademarks (Spartan, New Wrinkle, Perkins, Yankee, Uno, Bryant) - Chile, Cuba, Venezuela, France, Brazil, Canada, Switzerland, Argentina, Australia, Japan and Italy
c.1933-	1 file	U.S. Government Securities 1941
1933-	1 file	Cook County, Illinois, Tax Anticipation Warrants - legal correspondence
1919	1 file	Schedule B, Lamp Socket, Agreement includes annotated copies of negotiating papers; patent infringement claims industrial movie exists/8 and 16mm)
1930s	1 file	Advertising campaign for AddHere Line
1925-	1 book	Model Record Book listing #, date, name, 1948 and employee (including re-designs)
7/5/1889-	1 book	Articles of Association also Meeting Minutes dated 12/26/1900
1926-1963	1 book	Board of Directors Meetings minutes including resolution at the death of W. C. Bryant
1891-1937	1 file	Corporation Annual Reports (Government)
1938-1950	1 file	Corporation Annual Reports (Government)
1903-1947	1 file	Sundry Agreements and Contracts, Underwriters Laboratories Perkins Electric
1889	1 set	Perkins Switch: Articles of Incorporation Directors: E. L. Clark, W. C. Bryant, J. Bryant, and H. T. Clark
1895-	1 book	Perkins Electric: Stock Certificate Issue Book
9/1890-	1 book	Perkins Electric: Articles of Association 12/1/1900 and Meeting Minutes

Location of Bryant Electric Company Property in Bridgeport
Base Map: Bridgeport, Connecticut 1:24000 - USGS Quad. - 1984



Street Location Map - UTM Coordinate Locations
Quadrangle: Bridgeport, Connecticut