

BRYANT ELECTRIC COMPANY, BUILDINGS 22, 25, AND 32
623 Hancock Avenue
Bridgeport
Fairfield County
Connecticut

HAER No. CT-155-B

HAER
CONN
1-BRIGPO,
5B-

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

HAER
CONN
I-BRIGPO,
5B-

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

BRYANT ELECTRIC COMPANY, BUILDINGS 22, 25, AND 32

HAER No. CT-155-B

Location: 623 Hancock Avenue, Bridgeport, Fairfield County, Connecticut

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

L	18.650053.4558877	I	18.649978.4558827
H	18.650059.4558836	J	18.649973.4558865
		K	18.650036.4558872

Date of Construction: 1920

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

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The garage structure, building 22, was significant only as a component of the Bryant Electric Company Plant. It housed company vehicles and executive's personal automobiles. Building 32, the power plant, is significant primarily as a constituent of the Bryant complex. It is an example of how improved technology, increasing awareness of air pollution, energy costs and costs of real estate directed changes in plant operations. Boiler design changed significantly during the first half of the 20th century with increasing efficiency and decreasing size the goal. Bryant management took advantage of new technology by demolishing the old coal-fired steam plant and replacing it with compact, package boilers capable of burning either gas or oil. This opened up additional space for more manufacturing space on the site of the old boiler plant.

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.

Principal Investigators:
Betsy Kearns
Cece Saunders Kirkorian

Architectural Historian:
Steven Bedford

Industrial Historian:
Robert Stewart

Historical Perspectives
P.O. Box 3037
Westport, CT 06880

DESCRIPTION:

A large garage is located in the middle of the block west of Hancock Street. Building 22, the garage which was built in 1920, repeats the same architectural motifs established by the main building. A Warren truss supports its wide span roof. Building 25, a paint shop built in 1923, was adjacent to the garage on the north.

In 1968 the original 1899 steam plant was demolished to provide increased manufacturing space. The paint shop was extensively remodeled for use as a steam plant and renumbered building 32. The new power plant accommodated two package boilers manufactured by Cleaver-Brook and two Ingersoll-Rand air compressors. Power for the boilers and air compressors came from a 5 KVA transformer located on a mezzanine at the east end of the building. A tunnel under Hancock Avenue connected power, air and steam lines to the main factory complex.

HISTORY:

Overhead belt and pulley power transmission systems were never used at Bryant. As a prominent firm in the thriving electrical industry, there was a preference for the use of motors to drive machinery. The company used motor-generators to provide electricity for testing products but in general relied on power purchased from public utilities. Steam was used primarily to heat the buildings and power some machinery. The site of the original steam plant accommodated buildings 29 and 33 where load centers and electric base heaters were fabricated.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION/BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bedford, Steven.

"Architectural Survey of the Bryant Electric Company Complex in Bridgeport, Connecticut." Westport, CT: Historical Perspectives, 1995. Photocopied.

Bryant Corporate Archives

Buildings of The Bryant Electric Company 1920 - Revised 1940

Fletcher-Thompson, Inc.

Site Plan Westinghouse/Bryant Division - 1968

Building 22/32 Plan

