

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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

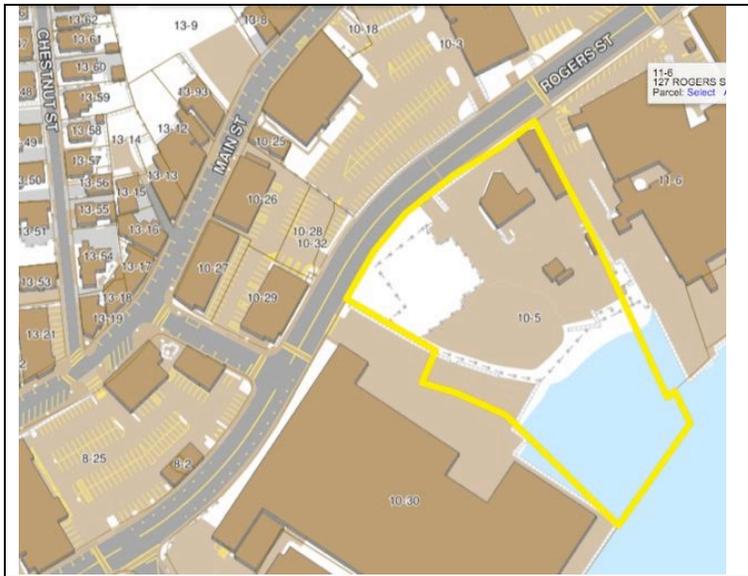
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Photograph



North and northwest (façade) and northeast elevations.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Wendy Frontiero and Kathleen K. Broomer

Organization: Gloucester Historical Commission

Date (month / year): d r a f t – June 2016

Town/City: Gloucester

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):
downtown

Address: 109 Rogers Street

Historic Name: Gloucester Electric Company Office and Switch Room

Uses: Present: industrial (utility)

Original: industrial (utility)

Date of Construction: ca. 1898-1903, ca. 1909-17

Source: see bibliography

Style/Form: Classical Revival

Architect/Builder:

Exterior Material:

Foundation: not visible

Wall/Trim: brick with brick and granite trim

Roof: tar and gravel / rubber

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
garages (ca. 1909-17; 1982)

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

Replacement window sash and infill (L 20th c?)

Condition: fair

Moved: no yes **Date:**

Acreage: 2.69 acres

Setting: Set between a major thoroughfare and Gloucester Harbor, within a heterogeneous, largely 20th century industrial/commercial streetscape. Large-scale cold storage building located to southwest, seafood production facility to north and northeast.

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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 Gloucester Electric Company Officer and Switch Room occupies a large, roughly trapezoidal lot between Rogers Street and Gloucester Harbor. The site is relatively flat near Rogers Street and then slopes gradually down to the southeast and the harbor. The parcel contains two major buildings, both located in the north corner of the property. The main building has a modest set back from Rogers Street. A set of garage buildings lines part of the northern property boundary, adjacent to Gorton's Seafood Center. Two smaller outbuildings are shown on the assessors map near the waterfront, but are not visible from the street.

A narrow band of turf and shrubbery borders the eastern and western elevations of the main building. A chain link fence lines the sidewalk (northwestern) edge of the property; it is bordered on its southern end by a landscaped strip that is maintained in lawn, shrubs, and trees, screening a field of electrical equipment in the southwest corner of the parcel. The rest of the visible portions of the lot are covered with asphalt pavement.

The main building consists of two parts, both constructed of brick and rising two stories to a flat roof. The front section (containing the offices) is an irregular pentagon, set askew to Rogers Street. Its entrance elevation is located at the narrow north corner (11 feet long), with long elevations extending backwards to the southwest and southeast. The two street-facing (north and southwest) facades are surmounted by a very faint brick dentil course and a heavy wood cornice. Fenestration on the front block consists of single and paired double-hung windows within segmentally arched openings, trimmed with gauged brick lintels and granite sills. The narrow entrance façade is one bay wide, framed by plain brick pilasters. It features a granite stairway; an arched entrance with a modern single-leaf door, brick archivolt, and granite impostes and keystones on the ground floor; and paired windows above.

Measuring 22 feet deep by 70 feet long, a simple rectangular block (the switch room) forms the back section of the substation and projects eastward of the front block. This rear portion has wide brick piers at the corners of its eastern end, with a blank wall facing Rogers Street and windows (two on the first floor and one on the second) on its northeast elevation. The southwest walls of the front and back blocks are flush, articulated by only one window on the first floor, towards the front of the building, and one on the second floor, towards the back.

The long garage structure appears to consist of three connected parts, measuring roughly 110 long by 32 feet deep at its northern half and 27 feet deep at its southern half. The garage is clad with stucco and rises one story to a flat roof. Vehicle bays have rectangular openings, with four large doors on the earlier, northern half (closest to Rogers Street; ca. 1909-17), two in the center, and one open bay at the extreme southern end (1982).

The Gloucester Electric Company Office and Switch Room building is an intact, relatively well-preserved example of industrial architecture from the turn of the 20th century. The major alteration is the installation of replacement window sash and infill panels. The early 20th century portion of the garage structure appears to have been stuccoed when the additional bays were added in the late 20th century. The Office and Switch Room is notable for its modestly ornamental brick and granite trim, segmentally arched window openings, and decorative brick and wood cornices.

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.

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This building was the company office of Gloucester Electric Company from its construction (ca. 1898-1903) until 1953, when the company merged with other utilities to form Essex County Electric Company, later Massachusetts Electric Company. Gloucester's electric power supply system dates to 1884, with the incorporation of Gloucester Electric Light Company. The Electric Light Company merged with Gloucester Electric Company in 1888, building a brick plant, 102 feet by 52 feet, in 1891 at Vincent's Point, adjacent to Vincent Cove. The two-story plant encompassed a gallery, bathrooms, chambers, and offices, in addition to an engine and dynamo room, where coal was used to fuel the generation of electric power. Equipment in the early 1890s consisted of two compound condensing engines (300 horsepower each and boilers to match), two arc machines, one 1,300 incandescent dynamo, and one 40 horsepower generator. In 1892, the Gloucester Electric Company was reported to maintain "a fine wharf" with a dock at deep water to facilitate coal deliveries, and coal sheds on its wharf with a capacity of 900 tons [Pringle, 338].

By 1903, this two-story building, housing a company office on the first floor and storage on the second, was constructed on the front, or west side, of the Electric Company plant. The long southwest elevation of this building paralleled the path of Vincent Street, which connected the plant to Main Street. A number of industries were present here in the first decades of the 20th century. Immediate neighbors of the Gloucester Electric Company included a ship chandlery; Gorton-Pew Fisheries (see area form) on the east; fish houses associated with S. Lane & Brother Fish Wharf and later Parkhurst Fisheries on the west; the John Bishop Ship Yard, Cape Ann Laundry, Boynton Improved Process Oil Clothing Company, and Ipswich Mills hosiery manufacturing, all on Vincent Cove; and Union Hill Theater off of Main Street.

William H. Jordan was the first president of the Gloucester Electric Company. The company's capital increased from \$20,000 in 1890 to \$55,000 in 1905, then to \$314,000 in 1925. One of Gloucester's preeminent business owners and community leaders in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Jordan served as Electric Company president until at least 1905. He was a producer and curer of fish, and subsequently a jobber and distributor of fish; maintained a shipping firm with Orlando Merchant known as William H. Jordan & Co.; and served as collector of the port of Gloucester from 1900. Jordan's business positions included multiple terms as a director of the Atlantic Halibut Company, the Gloucester Mutual Fisherman's Insurance Company; City National Bank; and Gloucester National Bank. In community and civic life, Jordan presided over the association formed to supervise the 250th anniversary of the settlement and founding of Gloucester, and was chairman of the city's park commissioners, a school committee member, and a member of the board of directors of Sawyer Free Library [Cutter, 669-670].

In addition to its plant, in 1949 Gloucester Electric Company owned most of the buildings then remaining on Vincent Street, using them as storehouses or garages, including the detached garage ("auto stalls," ca. 1909-1917 and 1982) northeast of the office. The plant encompassed, in its final years, the office and meter room in the front part of the building, a switch room directly behind (to the south, ca. 1909-1917), a dynamo room, machine shop, and boiler house. Urban renewal on Gloucester's waterfront changed the street configuration in this area. Between 1961 and 1966, Rogers Street was extended from the west and past the Electric Company plant, and Vincent Street was discontinued. Only the Electric Company office and switch room at the rear survive, with the detached garage; the rest of the plant was demolished by 1971.

Gloucester Electric Company merged in 1953 with other power companies based in Salem and Beverly to form Essex County Electric Company. With the addition of companies in Lawrence, Haverhill, Amesbury, Lowell, Billerica, and the Merrimac Valley, Essex County Electric became known as Merrimack-Essex Electric Company in 1957, and merged with other companies further to become Massachusetts Electric Company in 1962. Massachusetts Electric still owns the building, which is described in assessors' records as a substation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

City of Gloucester. Assessors records.

Gloucester maps and atlases: 1884, 1899.

Sanborn maps: 1888, 1892, 1898, 1903, 1909, 1917, 1949, 1960.

Gloucester directories: 1870-1930s.

Annual Report of the Board of Gas and Electric Light Commissioners of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Fifth through Ninth Annual Reports (January 1890-January 1894). Boston: Wright & Potter Printing Co., 1890-1894.

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Cutter, William Richard. *Genealogical and Person Memoirs Relating to the Families of Boston and Eastern Massachusetts*. Vol. I. Baltimore, MD: Clearfield Company, 1995-2008 (reprint of 1908 edition).

Osborne, Paul E. Corporate History of Gas and Electric Utilities in Commonwealth of Massachusetts. Massachusetts Department of Public Utilities. Via <http://www.mass.gov/eea/docs/dpu/rates/gas-and-electric-company-corporate-histories.pdf>. Retrieved April 2016.

Pringle, James R. *History of the Town and City of Gloucester, Cape Ann, Massachusetts*. Gloucester: By the author, 1892.

SUPPLEMENTARY IMAGES



Northwest (façade) and southwest elevations.



Garage buildings: Southwest (façade) elevation

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National Register of Historic Places Criteria Statement Form

Check all that apply:

- Individually eligible Eligible **only** in a historic district
- Contributing to a potential historic district Potential historic district

Criteria: **A** **B** **C** **D**

Criteria Considerations: **A** **B** **C** **D** **E** **F** **G**

Statement of Significance by

The criteria that are checked in the above sections must be justified here.