

Records Storage Building, *Old Anaconda Copper Works*
Elm and Market Streets
Perth Amboy
Middlesex County
New Jersey

HAER NJ-32

HAER
NJ,
12-PERAM,
4-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C.

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

HAER
NJ,
12-PERAM,
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NJ-32
Master Photo List

Records Storage Building
Anaconda Copper Refinery

Location: Foot of Elm and Market Streets,
Perth Amboy, Middlesex County,
New Jersey. 15th Congressional
District of New Jersey.

Date of Construction: Industrial complex: 1900 - 1918;
Records Storage Building: after 1918 (?)

Present Owner: Raritan River Steel Company
c/o Ferrco Engineering, Ltd.,
1400 Hopkins Street, South Whitby,
Ontario, Canada, L1N-2C3.

Present Use: Demolished.

Significance: Records Storage Building was part of
industrial complex important in the
development of the Perth Amboy area.
Though built later than the major
structures in the complex, building
design and detail complemented the
earlier buildings, creating an
architecturally significant complex
of classically detailed industrial
buildings.

General Description of Industrial Complex

The site of the Old Anaconda Copper Works is presently owned by the Raritan River Steel Company and is used for industrial purposes. Demolition of several structures is in progress; the site is not accessible to the general public.

Site Description:

The property is located on a peninsula on the north shore of the Raritan River at the south end of the city of Perth Amboy, Middlesex County, New Jersey. The site consists of approximately 91 acres.

Prior to 1900, the site was a marsh area. According to the Everts & Stewart Combination Atlas Map of Middlesex County, New Jersey (Philadelphia, Pa., 1876), the City of Perth Amboy had planned to continue several residential streets into the site. The map shows streets, block numbers, and a railroad, but no development. An index of Perth Amboy businesses shows no copper refinery or other major metallurgical works at the site.

The complex was evidently developed between 1900 and 1910. Two index books of plans, specifications and blueprints of the Anaconda Copper Refinery, located in the office building at the site, show that the bulk of the early drawings for buildings and equipment fall in the following periods: first drawings - 1899; major periods - 1905-7, 1915-18, and 1924-28. The actual drawings and plans were removed by the Anaconda Copper Company when they vacated the property a few years ago.

The original complex contained about forty major structures, dating from c. 1900 - 1950s. The key resource that identifies these structures is the 1918 Sanborn Insurance Map of Perth Amboy. Many of the original buildings have been demolished. The remaining original buildings are of modest but substantial brick construction; only the entrance to the main office is distinguished with architectural detail. The records storage building, though built after 1918, is similar in character to the other buildings.

The following seven buildings are considered to be of historic and architectural interest:

1) Carpenter/Blacksmith Shop

The Carpenter/Blacksmith Shop, a large (150'x75'), three story brick structure, was originally a steam generated power plant, as noted on the Sanborn Map. The large brick stack, the only major one remaining in the complex, is 150' tall. The building has a brick frieze and cornice, arched windows, and a monitor.

2) Main Lab

A smaller building on the site was labeled the "Anaconda Lab" on the 1918 Sanborn Map. The present Main Lab, a larger building on the same site, is a brick, one-story, rectangular, hipped roof building with arched windows and broad dormers.

3) Main Office

The most elaborate building on the site, the Main Office was meant to be the focal point and VIP entrance to the complex. The building is 2 stories with irregular massing and varying roof lines. A conical roof with pinnacle marks the main entrance. The entrance porch is a massive brick arch supported by clusters of four ionic columns which reveals entrance doors. The roof

4) Records Storage Building

The records storage building is a windowless, 1-story rectangular brick building. The facades are articulated by brick pilasters forming recessed panels and feature a corbeled cornice. The large paneled wood entrance door features a wood entablature. The building has a flat roof with parapet wall (no parapet on S side). Although built later than the other buildings of the complex (it is not on the 1918 map), the records storage building is similar in style and detail to the surrounding buildings.

5) Water Treatment Building

A very simple one-story brick building with adjacent pond. It is called the Filter House on the 1918 Sanborn Map and is approximately 75'x30' in size.

6) Hospital/Infirmary

The infirmary is a small one-story brick structure with arched windows and hipped roof. Next to it is a two door brick garage used for ambulance storage. Labeled Hospital and Auto on the Sanborn Map, these buildings measure approximately 30'x30'.

7) Tank House #2

This large factory building consists of two long bays each with a monitor roof to provide interior light. One bay has a monitor over a butterfly roof. The other has a stepped monitor. The end walls and side walls are brick. The window areas, once glass, are now covered with green corrugated fiberglass. The building originally had several small functional support structures attached to its south wall (pump rooms and tank rooms) - probably for acid used in connection with the copper refining process. Some of these are now demolished as is the main east end wall. The structural roof support elements can be seen clearly on this end wall in the enclosed photo. The building is about 550'x200' in size.

SIGNIFICANCE

The significant period for this property is 1900-1918. The areas of significance are architecture and industry.

Architecture: The general massiveness of the structures as well as some fine details in the cornice corbeling and window arched brick lintels show a sensitivity to style and design as well as function on the part of the engineers and architects who conceived the complex. The brick and mortar structural walls were designed for long-term functional use and low maintenance. The skylight and monitor design showed contemporary thinking in developing industrial structures that provided both necessary light and air.

As noted in the description of the Office (above), the use of classic columns and ornamental detail indicate a pride on the part of the original Copper Company. It was an attempt to impress visitors and fellow business people that the company was wealthy and stable - like the classic structures of the ancient world - and, like them, that the company would endure. As a viable economic force, the buildings did, in fact, function in that way for almost three-quarters of a century.

Industrial: A study of the 1876 Everts and Stewart Atlas of Middlesex County, shows that the business - industrial community in Perth Amboy at that time consisted mainly of small businesses, partnerships and small scale manufacturing. By 1914-18, however, when the Sanborn Insurance Maps of Perth Amboy were published, several major industrial complexes were noted. The 35-40 intervening years, therefore, saw major economic and industrial development in Perth Amboy, generally paralleling that of the rest of the state and indeed, the nation as a whole. Because of its viable site location with a docking facility on the Raritan River-Raritan Bay area, its large complex of structures, its proximity to New York City, and its basically important product of copper, the Raritan Copper Works played a more than moderate role in the industrial development of the Perth Amboy area.

Major Bibliographic References:

1. Everts and Stewart. Combination Atlas Map of Middlesex County, New Jersey. 714-716 Filbert Street, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 1876.
2. Sanborn Insurance Map of Perth Amboy, New Jersey. Published by the Sanborn Map Company, 11 Broadway, New York. 1914 (Note: the published date is 1914 but the Perth Amboy page containing the Raritan Copper Works Site includes the note - "Update 1918").

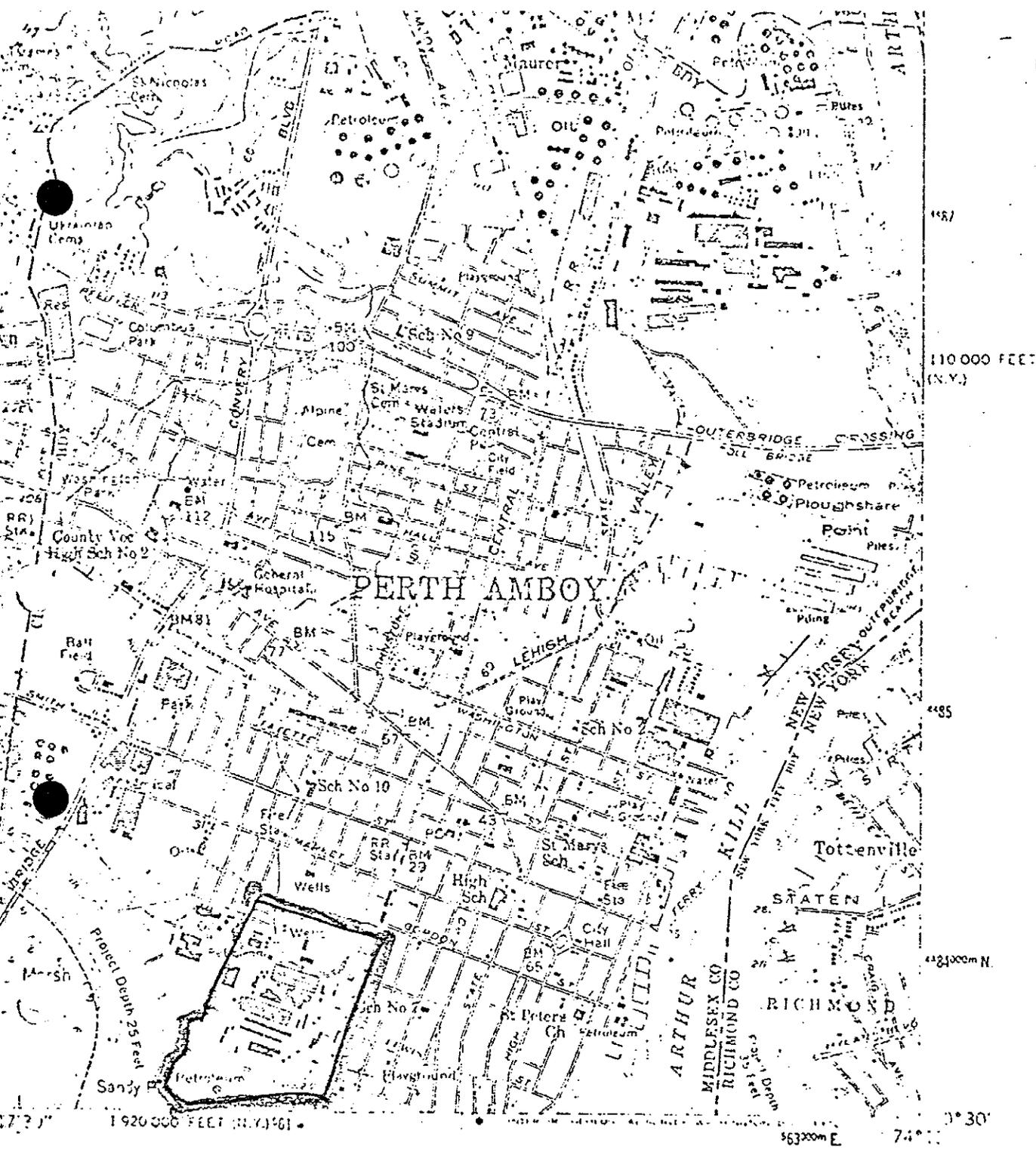
3. Index Books (2) - for plans, specifications and blueprints, Raritan Copper Works and Anaconda Copper Company. Located in Raritan River Steel Company Office at the property site in Perth Amboy.

4. Interview and general discussions with Mr. Kenneth Billington - Chief Expediter - Ferrco Steel Company. Information (verbal) obtained during on-site visit - December 20, 1977.

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ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Heavy-duty Light-duty
- Medium-duty Unimproved dirt

- U.S. Route
- State Route



PERTH AMBOY LOCATION

PERTH AMBOY, N. J. N. Y.

N4030 - W7415 '5

1956

AMERICAN MAP CO. NEW YORK, N. Y.

APPROXIMATE BOUNDARIES - RARITAN RIVER STEEL CO.