

Trow & Holden Company, Granite Tool Works
45-55 South Main Street
Barre
Washington County
Vermont

HAER No. VT-7

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Engineering Record
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

TROW & HOLDEN COMPANY, GRANITE TOOL WORKS
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Location: 45-55 South Main Street, Barre, Washington County, Vermont.

Dates of Construction: Brick forge, wood outer buildings for storage and shipping, and machine shop circa 1877 through 1891; brick office addition circa 1906 through 1910; brick storage annex and frame addition circa 1920 through 1923.

Present Owner and Occupant: Trow and Holden Tool Company, Jack Akley, president.

Significance: Trow and Holden has been making the specialized tools used in the granite industry for more than 90 years. The tools and some of the machines to produce the tools have remained essentially unchanged from the early twentieth century. The granite tool works represents an integral part of the stone quarrying industry in Vermont.

Historians: Judy Kaplan, Margaret Mazer, and Rachel D. Webb, July 1980.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

- A. Physical History: Repairs and alterations made since 1956 are recorded at the Barre City Building Department (created that year).
- B. Historical Context: The Trow and Holden Company was established in 1890 by John Trow and Clark Holden to manufacture cutting and carving tools for Barre's burgeoning granite industry. The firm's first place of business was a building on Flint Place off of Granite Street in the heart of Barre's granite production area. In 1905, John Trow and Clark Holden sold the business to Clark's son William. In 1906, the new owner purchased the property at 45-55 South Main Street from Stafford and Holden Fork Company, which had owned it since 1877. The improvements on the property included a brick forge and machine shop, a storage facility, and wooden outbuildings. Incorporated in 1911, the company issued stock valued at \$500,000. William Holden was the majority stock holder, remaining so until his death in 1941. He sold the property and improvements to the new corporation in 1912. An adjoining piece of property was procured by the company in 1914 for the purpose of expansion. Max Holden, son of William and vice president of the company at the time of his father's death, took over as majority stock holder until 1970. Gordon (brother-in-law of Max Holden) and Nora Akley purchased all of the stock at that time.

At present, there are few companies in the United States which manufacture these specialized stone-working tools. Trow and Holden enjoys a strong export market as well as its domestic customers. The buildings and work methods have changed little during the company's history. The original source of power was water in the Stafford and Holden Fork Factory buildings. Trow and Holden continued to use this power generated by a dam on the Stephens Branch of the Winooski River. Rebuilt once in 1913, the original dam was totally replaced following a disastrous flood in 1927. By 1945, however, the entire plant was operating on electricity. Production has remained fairly constant except for peak periods caused by switching to the manufacture of war materials during World War II and the Korean War. Production declined slightly in the early 1950s due to the introduction of carbide which prolongs the life and sharpness of tools. Demand for new tools and repairs was consequently lower.

Trow and Holden has adapted to new methods of production but has maintained some of the older ones as well. A bright future for the firm seems assured as long as granite quarrying continues, which is a likely prospect. Many of the workers at the family-run firm are and have been life-long employees. The local granite industry has been an important economic base for central Vermont since the late nineteenth century and remains so today. Trow and Holden products remain an important adjunct to the industry.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. Dimensions: an irregularly-shaped building with the following perimeter measurements beginning with a point at the northeast corner and working clockwise - 42'5"; 60'; 28'10 1/4"; 80'1/4"; 18'5"; 24'4"; 18'1 3/4"; 83'11"; 55'11"; 66'3"; 57' 1/2"; 95'2"; 16'; 47'8"; 41'; 63'11"; 5'; 54'7 1/2"; 42'4".
- B. Materials: The walls of the forge are brick. Some of the windows have granite sills and brick hoods.
- C. Site: The building is oriented north-south, with the main entrance on the east facade, which faces South Main Street. The west facade faces a river.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

Field measurements taken July 1980.

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken in July 1980 by participants in the Fourth Annual Industrial Archeology Institute sponsored by the University of Vermont Graduate Program in Historic Preservation. Eric DeLony, principal architect, HAER, directed the project.

Prepared and transmitted by: Holly K. Chamberlain
HAER
March 25, 1987

ADDENDUM TO:
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FIELD RECORDS

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