

FORM B – BUILDING

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

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| 22/1 | Reading | | 405 |
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MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
 MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
 220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
 BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Town: Reading

Place: (*neighborhood or village*) Downtown

Photograph



Address: 612 Main Street

Historic Name: Masonic Block Addition

Uses: Present: commercial

Original: commercial

Date of Construction: 1930

Source: Dept. of Public Safety

Style/Form: Classical Revival Commercial

Architect/Builder: Adden, Parker, Clinch & Crimp, arch.;
E.B. Currell & Son, builders

Exterior Material:

Foundation: concrete

Wall/Trim: granite

Roof: tar & gravel

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures:
none

Major Alterations (*with dates*):

date unknown – alterations to storefronts

Condition: good

Moved: no | x | yes | | **Date** _____

Acreage: 0.73 acre

Setting: downtown business district

Topographic or Assessor's Map



Recorded by: Lisa Mausolf

Organization: Reading Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): December 2009

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AUG 20 2010
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INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

READING

612 MAIN STREET

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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.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

Constructed adjacent to the Masonic Block in 1930, this single-story block was constructed to accommodate three stores of unequal sizes. Each of the shops features large plate glass display windows set in bronze frames, flanking a central, recessed entrance with taller windows in the central storefront. Ornament on the block is restrained and in the Classical Revival style that was popular in the early 20th century. Each of the storefronts is flanked by a fluted pilaster strip topped by a decorative rosette. The remainder of the simple frieze is decorated by triglyph-like indentations with a projecting cornice decorated by mutule blocks. Underneath each display window a polished granite apron provides a base for the storefront window glazing system and is punctuated by a rectangular bronze vent grille decorated by a chevron design. The signboard/transom areas above the display windows have seen varying degrees of alterations although some bronze moldings survive and transom glass may survive under the present signage. Other details include a diamond-shaped pattern in the wood-paneled ceiling over the entrance and square decorative tiles in the flooring of the storefront entrance alcoves.

The exposed north wall is constructed of brick with additional secondary entrances capped by awnings.

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.

Late in 1929, the Masonic Corporation announced plans to build an addition to the original three-story brick block at the northwest corner of Haven and Main Streets (*Chronicle*, Nov. 1, 1929). The land was sold by Lilla Swain to the Reading Masonic Temple Corporation in 1929 (Book 5406, Page 107). In December an article in the newspaper announced the architects (*Chronicle*, Dec. 27, 1929). It was designed by Boston architects, Adden, Parker, Clinch & Crimp, all but one of whom lived in Reading. E. B. Currell & Son were the contractors. The stores were built on the site of the Daniel Pratt House, which was demolished for the project. Daniel Pratt was an important clock maker living on the Main Street with his manufactory behind his residence. As the down town transitioned from residential to commercial use, pre-existing houses on Main Street were moved or demolished to make space available for new construction.

The early tenants of the new commercial block were M.F. Charles, stationers; F.W. Woolworth's 5 & 10 cent store and W.T. Grant's. Woolworth's opened to the public on August 22, 1930, followed by Grant's on August 30th. The southernmost store was occupied initially by M.F. Charles and later by the Willis Pharmacy. The middle store was occupied by Woolworth's until 1954 when it moved a few doors north. Western Auto occupied the middle store from 1954 until 1968 at which time M.F. Charles moved in. The north store was leased to W.T. Grant for more than 30 years. The Sense of Wonder gift store was located here for a number of years.

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HISTORICAL NARRATIVE (continued)

The architects, Willard P. Adden (1868-1958) and Winthrop D. Parker (1871-1955) were both Reading natives. Winthrop D. Parker graduated from MIT in 1896 and may well have designed the waterworks engineer's house at 75 Mill Street the following year. Willard Parker Adden was in practice in the 1890s with other architects including Russell W. Porter with whom he designed the Spafford Town Library in Springfield, Vermont in 1895 and prominent Boston architect Charles Brigham with whom he designed the James Library Building in Madison, New Jersey in 1900 (Mausolf). According to MACRIS, the 1898 design for the Cleveland Chandler House in Brookline is also attributed to Adden & Parker but was probably the work of one of the architects working alone.

Adden & Parker formally joined in partnership about 1905. They were the architects for the Congregational Church in Laconia, New Hampshire in 1905 and the Goss Reading Room in the Lakeport section of Laconia in 1905. In 1906 they designed a large estate in North Andover, "Broadfields" for George H. Simonds. Other residential commissions of note include the Elliot Taber House at 271 Hawthorn Street in New Bedford (1916) and the James Murray House at 41 Orchard Street in New Bedford (1922). All of these homes were Colonial Revival in style.

In the early 1920s they designed a number of buildings at Shawsheen Village in Andover for the American Woolen Company. The designs for a garage at 339 North Main Street (1921), executive offices at 10 Haverhill Street (1923) and an administration building at 16 Balmoral Street (1923) have all been attributed to the firm but there are also probably other buildings they designed for the complex, including possibly homes. By 1930 the firm was known as Adden, Parker, Clinch and Crimp, with the addition of partners Howard Clinch and Frank Crimp. A brief article in the *Reading Chronicle* on March 21, 1930 stated that "the firm of Adden, Parker, Clinch & Crimp is one of the busiest in New England. It recently completed plans for a home for ex-Governor Spaulding at Rye Beach and is also making plans for two beautiful homes at Hanover".

The earliest known work by Adden and Parker in Reading is the former Reading High School at 52 Sanborn Street in 1906. The pair were architects for a number of other buildings in Reading including a house for Albert French, now 39 Ellis Avenue (1909), the First Congregational Church (1911), Reading Town Hall (1918), Reading Public Library (1918), as well as a number of buildings which are no longer extant: original Parker Jr. High School, Oakland Road High School, and Reading Police Station.

No other similar small commercial blocks by Adden & Parker are known at this time.

BIBLIOGRAPHY and/or REFERENCES

Adams, Virginia. Information on Adden & Parker, Dec. 2009.

Massachusetts Historical Commission, MACRIS database.

Mausolf, Lisa. Misc. research on Willard P. Adden, 2010.

Middlesex South Registry of Deeds, Cambridge, Mass.

Reading Chronicle, Nov. 1, 1929; Dec. 27, 1929; March 7, 1930; March 21, 1930; April 11, 1930; April 25, 1930 [construction of the building]; July 7, 1955 [obituary of Winthrop D. Parker] and June 26, 1958 [obituary of Willard P. Adden].

Reading 350th Book Committee. *At Wood End – Reading, Massachusetts 1644-1994, A Pictorial History*, 1994.

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DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY
DIVISION OF INSPECTION
PLAN RECORD

CASE A RACK 2 APART. 26 NO. 38333 ✓
 BUILDING Store Building STORIES 1b
 CITY OR TOWN Reading STREET Main St
 TO BE USED FOR dept.stores CLASS 2nd
 OWNER Reading Masonic Bldg.Corp
 ARCHITECT Aden, Parker, Clinch & Crimp, Boston
 CERTIFICATE APPROVAL—SPECIFICATION REQUIREMENTS—REFERRED
 DATE June 20, 1930
 INSPECTOR Lewis

Form Bu 1 11-7-28 2M No. 4051

Building inspection card, Massachusetts Archives

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Undated photo of building showing original detail above display windows

Source: Reading Historical Commission