

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

Name of Property

Historic name: Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Location

Street & number: 90 Garfield Avenue

City or town: New London State: CT County: New London

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national **statewide** **local**

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A **B** **C** **D**

_____ Signature of certifying official/Title:	_____ Date
_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ Signature of commenting official:	_____ Date
_____ Title :	
_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that this property is:
- entered in the National Register
 - determined eligible for the National Register
 - determined not eligible for the National Register
 - removed from the National Register
 - other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY: manufacturing facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Industrial Loft

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Concrete, Cast Stone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Bloom Silk Company Factory is an industrial complex that was constructed between 1920 and 1960. The complex is located at 90 Garfield Avenue in New London, New London County, Connecticut, and consists of four interconnected buildings: two industrial lofts (Building Nos. 1 and 3), and a boiler house (Building No. 2). All buildings contribute to the significance of the complex. The complex is constructed almost entirely of red brick and utilizes a combination of brick piers and timber framing for the structural system. The buildings retain a high level of integrity. Most original materials, including exterior brick, window sash, and interior elements such as timber framing, wood floors, and doors are still intact.

Narrative Description

Setting

The complex is located near the western periphery of New London, approximately 1.8 miles east of the New London-Waterford line, 0.89 miles south of Interstate 95 (I-95), 0.9 miles west of the Thames River, and immediately east of the Civic Institutions National Register Historic District,

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

listed on the NRHP in 1990 (See location map, Figure 1).¹ The complex is sited on a level, 3.59-acre parcel that encompasses the central portion of the city block delineated on the north by Garfield Avenue, on the east by Connecticut Avenue, on the south by McDonald Street, and on the west by Jefferson Avenue (U.S. Route 1). Rows of late-nineteenth-century, multi-family homes line Connecticut Avenue east of the site and are found north of Garfield Avenue while a mix of light industrial, commercial and residential buildings are found to the south and west.

Architectural Character

Buildings 1 and 3 are arranged parallel to one another in a north-south direction and perpendicular to Garfield Avenue. They are slightly offset, with Building 1 located northwest of Building 3. The Boiler House (Building 2) is located on the south end of Building 1 and Building No. 4 is attached at the southwest end of Building No. 1 (see attached Site Plan). The two lofts are adjoined via a pair of enclosed, steel-frame, elevated walkways; the southernmost of these walkways is attached to the southern end of Building No. 1. and is interconnected with a modern, cinderblock loading dock on its southern elevation and an elevator tower. The northern walkway connects the northern end of Building No. 3 to Building No. 1. This configuration forms a central courtyard that is level and has been planted with grass. The rest of the open space surrounding the building is paved with asphalt.

Building Nos. 1 and 3 are both two-story industrial lofts constructed with brick-pier walls set on poured-concrete foundations with timber-framed truss roof structures. Building No. 2 (the Boiler House) shares the same architectural features found on the other buildings but is framed with steel instead of timber.

With the exception Building No. 4, the brick buildings are characterized throughout by shallow-pitched gable roofs, projecting brick piers with cast-stone caps, exterior towers containing bathrooms, brick corbelling along the cornice, and steel casement windows fitted with central hoppers, cast stone lintels, and sills. Brickwork throughout is arranged in a Common or American Bond pattern with rows of header bricks alternating every ten to 15 rows.

The interior spaces are characterized by large open plans which are made possible by the use of a truss system supported by the building's brick piers. The space has been segmented by some modern partitions, but these are removable. Much of the original fabric, including diagonally laid wooden floors, interior stairwells (located at the north and south ends of each building), and metal fire doors are visible throughout.

Building No. 1 -Loft

Exterior

¹ Sharon Churchill, "National Register of Historic Places Registration Form: Civic Institutions Historic District," March 15, 1990. NPS No. 90000602.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Building No. 1 was constructed in 1919-1920 and faces south toward Garfield Avenue. It is a two-story industrial loft with a long, narrow rectangular plan measuring approximately 400 feet in length (north-south) and 45 feet in width (east-west). The building is 56 bays long and six bays wide. A side-gabled ell measuring 60 feet by 50 feet projects from the northwest corner of the building. This was original to the structure when it was built in 1919-1920. The shallow-pitched roof is covered with tar and EPDM rubber and is lined by gable-arched parapets at the north and south ends and shorter, straight parapets along each side. The parapets of this building are lined with brick corbelling and are topped with terra cotta coping tiles throughout. Building No. 1 originally served as production space for weaving and winding operations while the ell was utilized as office, storage, and vault space for storing silk (Photograph 1).

The north elevation (façade) includes the six-bay gable end of the loft as well as the seven-bay side of the projecting ell on the west (Photograph 2). The gabled parapet emphasizes the low pitch of the roof and is aligned above the entrance to the building below. The entrance is accessed by a concrete walkway that leads to a slightly projecting cast-stone portico containing a pair of segmental arched doorways. It is asymmetrically placed on this elevation to account for the expanse of the ell to the west. The portico extends in height to reach the sills of the second story and is topped by a stepped cornice. The arches above each door are articulated to simulate stonework. Glass and aluminum entry doors topped by tall, single-light transoms have been fitted into the openings. The date of the building's construction "1919" is cast in relief between the two arches. The entire surround is painted red to match the building and the numbers are painted in gold (Photograph 3).

This is the most elaborately decorated elevation in the complex since these doors historically led into the administrative office. To the east of the portico, the two openings on the first story have been replaced with paired wood windows set above wood panels covering the lower half of the openings. The upper section of each opening is enclosed with concrete. To the east of the portico, there are four window bays on the first story that have been infilled with brick; this is likely an original feature given that this space corresponds with the location of a fireproof vault. The remainder of the openings on this elevation contain 24-light, steel-casement windows arranged with a pair of centrally placed, four-light hoppers, set within the upper and lower sections of each window.

The majority of the original windows on the east elevation of Building No. 1 are intact (Photograph 4). Two enclosed elevated walkways connect the second story of Building No. 1 to Building No. 2 at the twentieth bay from the north and third bay from the south. The northernmost connector (ca. 1923) has a steel frame with cross-bracing supporting a wooden deck. The walls are clad in corrugated metal with three small, square openings and a flat roof that is covered in EPDM. The southernmost connector is a two-story concrete block structure with a flat roof and an asymmetrically placed elevator shaft (also constructed of concrete block). The elevator is partially obscured by a modern (post 1960), shed-roofed loading dock that has been added to the connector's south end.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

The south elevation of Building No. 1 is obscured by the adjoined Boiler House (Building No. 2) (Photograph 5). However, since the boiler house sits at a lower height, a section of the loft is visible including several windows and the gabled parapet which is lined by the same brick corbelling and terra cotta coping tiles carried over from the façade. This elevation is six bays wide with the three bays on upper story on the western half containing six-light, steel-casement windows, and the three bays to the east are infilled with brick. There is also one exposed bay on the first story to the west of the boiler house which exhibits a segmental-arch doorway and small segmental-arch window opening, both of which have been infilled with brick.

The south elevation is seven bays wide (Photograph 7). Each bay contains the original casement windows found throughout the rest of the building with central hoppers. Two bays (the second and third from the west) contain a two-story, flat-roofed, brick tower set with steel casement windows on the western, eastern, and southern elevations. This original exterior tower contains an interior water closet and mimics the design of the larger building with cast stone lintels and sills, brick corbelling and terracotta coping tiles.

The west elevation is identical in design to the east elevation with 38 exposed bays containing all original windows, although many have missing or broken panes. The southernmost 12 bays are obscured by an addition.

At the corner of the addition and Building No. 1 (to the north) there is a two-story, flat-roofed, brick water closet tower containing two sets of steel casement windows on the western and northern elevations. An additional two-story, flat-roofed, brick water closet tower is adjoined at the thirteenth and fourteenth bay from the north. This tower contains three sets of nine-light above twelve-light steel casement windows on the western, northern, and southern elevations. This original staircase mimics the decorative features found on the main building. Each window opening on the west elevation contains a pair 24-light steel casement windows with central hoppers, each with a cast stone lintel and sill.

Appended to the southwest corner of Building No. 1 is a shed-roof addition. This addition was constructed in stages between ca. 1920 and 1960. It is two stories in height and measures 82' long by 35' wide. The southern elevation is austere in design with the exception of the first story, which is clad in red brick and has light corbelling near the roof and an exposed concrete sill (Photograph 6). The second story, which was added or modified ca. 1960, is constructed of concrete cinder block. A single, square window opening is centrally located on the second story and has been boarded shut.

The addition was constructed leaving the original exterior wall and windows of Building No. 1 intact on the interior (Photograph 8). The western elevation of this addition shows that it was the result of several expansions and modifications (Photograph 6). It is devoid of any detail with the exception of some light brick corbelling that continues from the south elevation near the top of the southern end of the first story. The first story is clad in red brick and includes a segmental-arch doorway and window opening, both of which are infilled with red brick. The first story and second

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

story of the northern half is constructed from concrete block and a second story on top of the brick southern half is also constructed of concrete block. A small concrete exhaust chimney extends from the roof of the northern section. There are three square windows evenly spaced on the second story that have been boarded shut. Although the earliest section appears to date from within the established period of significance, the overall structure lacks the same design, materials and workmanship found in Buildings 1, 2 and 3. Also, there is no association with the Bloom Factory or with silk manufacturing; therefore this building appears to be non-contributing to the overall significance of the complex.

Interior

The interior includes 64,000 square feet of space divided between two long, rectangular loft buildings, each with two floors. The interior of the first floor of Building No.1 has partitioned at the north end. These partitions are nonstructural and can be removed without jeopardizing the integrity of the original space. The rest of the space remains open as it would have been when the building was used to wind silk. The original concrete floors are intact, along with all of the timber posts, which exhibit fire-resistant chamfered edges. The structural posts support a series of centrally located timber girts that run the length of the space and in turn, hold a series of perpendicular cross beams (Photograph 9). Typically, lofts constructed with load bearing masonry walls and interior wood framing exhibit a set of wood posts supporting large beams that run perpendicular to the length of the building. These provide additional support for the walls and floor. In this case, the central timber girts aid in supporting the perpendicular beams and floor joists and eliminate the need for a second set of structural posts. This allows the space to be more open than is typically found in industrial lofts of this age.

The second-floor interior space is partitioned into large workspaces with a dropped ceiling fitted with acoustic tiles installed in many of the areas. The partitioned areas are accessible via a side hallway running the length of the building. These partitions date from the latter half of the 20th century and appear to be removable without jeopardizing the original building fabric.² The interior contains many of its original historic features including diagonally laid, slow-burning wood flooring, fire doors, slow-burning wood timber posts, and the originally exposed timber roof truss system (Photographs 10 & 11).

The interior of the ell is accessible from an automatic closing fire door (Photograph 12). This space contains original diagonally laid wood flooring and the same structural truss system as the larger buildings (Photograph 13). The lower floor contains some early character-defining features from when it was used as an office, including a wood-paneled vestibule, wood doors with glass lights in the upper half, and a "T"-shaped door handle designed with the logo of the Templeton Company (Photograph 14).

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Building No. 2 - Boiler House

The Boiler House measures 50' x 43', and is a two-story, brick-pier building set on a poured-concrete foundation and attached to the south end of Loft No. 1. An early steel exhaust vent protrudes above the northern ridge of the low-pitched gabled roof, which is covered with tar and EPDM rubber material. It was constructed between 1919 and 1920 to house the extant Bigelow steam boiler and electric utilities (Photograph 15). The Bloom factory was powered by electricity, so this boiler house was constructed for the purpose of providing heat, rather than power to the plant. It is immediately adjacent to Truman's Brook, an underground stream that runs just west of the complex. The building has gabled parapets and a decorative corbelled cornice. A cast-stone water table surrounds the building. Unlike the lofts, the roof structure is of steel-frame truss construction (Photograph 16).

The Boiler House faces south toward McDonald Street. The western two bays and the fourth bay from the west contain original casement windows on the upper story. The third bay is infilled with brick and the use of a lighter mortar color shows that this was a later alteration. The two easternmost bays include a double-wide sliding door constructed from vertical wooden panels, above which is a heavy concrete lintel that separates the door from a set of steel casement windows on the second story.

The west elevation is a blind wall without any openings, but the decorative cornice and parapet continues to this elevation. The east elevation also features the gabled parapet end and is six bays wide. It is partially obscured by the addition of the modern loading dock (Photograph 17). This elevation mimics the projecting pilaster pattern found throughout the rest of the complex. The southernmost bay contains a standard-sized entrance topped by a wide, flat concrete lintel separating the door from a boarded window bay directly above. The first story contains an additional five window bays that have been boarded shut. Above each bay is a twelve-light steel casement window (the two center and northern bays are boarded). A 125' tall brick smokestack was removed from the southwestern corner of the Boiler House at an unknown date but appears on the Sanborn maps of the area from 1951.

The interior of the Boiler House retains the original concrete floors, the original Bigelow steam boiler, duct work dating from the first half of the 20th century, steel roof trusses, wood plank roof decking, and an electrical service that appears to be original (Photographs 18 & 19).

Building No. 3 -Loft

This two-story industrial loft building was completed in 1923 and is almost identical to Building No. 1 in its design. This building was also used for warping winding and weaving of silk. It is 56-bays long and seven bays wide, and measures approximately 400' in length (north to south) and 55' in width (east to west) (Photograph 20). The low-pitched gabled roof is covered with tar and EPDM rubber material and is lined with gabled parapets and a corbelled cornice. Unlike building No. 1, Building No.2 has a pronounced, and in some sections decorated, concrete sill.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Exterior

Building No. 3 faces south onto Garfield Avenue but is set back approximately 140'. The façade (north elevation) was modified sometime in the latter half of the 20th century for an unknown purpose. It is clad with a mix of material, including vertical and horizontally arranged wooden clapboards; this might suggest that the end wall of the factory failed and was reconstructed, or a temporary addition was removed. The first story contains a centrally located set of modern steel doors, and a single modern door at the far eastern end. The only opening on the second story is a single, modern four-light window that is arranged off center on the elevation. The parapet at this gabled end is in place, but the decorative cornice is missing (Photograph 21).

The east (side) elevation of Building No. 3 is 56-bays wide. With only a few exceptions, most of the original 24-light windows with central hoppers on the second story are intact, although many of the glass panes are missing or broken. On the first story, most of the windows are either missing or boarded shut and are therefore not visible. This elevation contains two, two-story, flat-roofed, brick water closet towers both of which mimic the design of the larger building exhibiting cast stone lintels, sills, and brick corbelling. These held the original water closets for the factory as shown on the Sanborn Maps from 1951 (Figure 4). The first tower is attached to the east elevation at the third and fourth bay from the north. Nine-light casement windows are located on the second story of the tower's east elevation. An identical tower is attached at the south-central end with one original steel casement window remaining on the second floor. The tower is attached on the south to a brick, two-story elevator tower with a single standard-sized door and a continued corbelled brick cornice. The tower is also attached to a two-story, wood-frame, shed-roofed addition to the north.

The openings on the south elevation is either infilled with brick or boarded shut (Photograph 22). The two westernmost bays on the second story have also been filled with brick but all retain the original cast stone lintels and sills. The two eastern bays contain 24-light steel casement windows with four-light hoppers.

The east and west (side) elevations of Building No. 3 are identical in design (Photograph 23). On the west elevation, eleven windows at the southern end of the second story have been replaced with modern two-light windows with concrete infill above. Most of the other windows on this elevation are intact though many panes are broken or are missing. A concrete and brick staircase leading to a modern door at the southwestern corner and a set of two shed-roofed overhangs covering a concrete loading dock is located at the far southwestern end.

Interior

An interior staircase separated by fire doors at the southwestern corner allows access to the interior floors (Photograph 24). The interior of the first floor of Building No.3 is largely open and the original diagonally laid wooden and concrete floors are intact, along with all of the timber structural posts which exhibit fire-resistant chamfered edges. The structural system on the first floor is identical to Building No. 1 (Photograph 25). Timber posts hold a series of centrally located

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

timber girts that run the length of the open space and hold a series of perpendicular cross beams. These central girts aid in supporting the perpendicular beams and floor joists and eliminate the need for a second set of structural posts.

The second story has been partitioned into large areas accessible via a hallway that runs along the western side of the building (Photograph 26). These partitions are non-structural. The interior retains much of its original historic fabric including diagonally laid, slow-burning wood flooring, fire doors, fire-proof heavy timber posts, and the exposed timber roof truss system (Photograph 27).

Integrity

The Bloom Silk Company Factory complex retains integrity of design, as a long, narrow loft building purpose-built for weaving or “throwing” silk. The location and setting remain intact with a National Register district to the west and residential properties dating from the early 20th century on the east and north and with only a small amount of infill in the surrounding area. The materials and workmanship are expressed through retention of nearly all of the original exterior and interior features with the only significant loss being the brick smokestack that once served the Boiler House. The extant original architectural features, including most original steel casement windows, wooden fire-resistant floors, fire doors, structural supports, and the original Bigelow Boiler Company steam boiler, express the historical and architectural significance of the complex. The simple yet decorative masonry found in the corbelled cornices and on the portion of the building that served as an administrative office show recall a high degree of workmanship. Finally, the complex conveys a sense of feeling and association with New London’s industrial past and more specifically the City’s important place in the regional textile industry.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1919-1949

Significant Dates

1919

1923

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Van Kirk, P.S. (Builder)

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory is significant under Criterion A in the category of Industry and Criterion C in the category of Architecture, both at the local level of significance. The complex is associated with New London's silk manufacturing history and with Edward Bloom, one of the most respected silk manufacturers in "America's Silk City", Paterson, New Jersey. Although Bloom retained plants in Paterson and later opened a shop in Putnam, Connecticut, his presence in New London is significant because it signals a collaborative effort between members of the local Chamber of Commerce and regional business figures. Local members of the Chamber of Commerce, who were also active in the city's silk manufacturing operations, enticed Bloom to come to New London in an effort to expand and diversify the city's industrial activity. Under Criterion C, the factory is significant as a well-preserved example of a purpose-built, brick-pier industrial building that retains character-defining features including long and narrow proportions; an open plan with exterior water closet and elevator towers; original 24-light, steel-casement windows with hoppers and cast stone lintels and sills; a shallow-pitched roof lined with a corbelled cornice, and a gabled parapet topped with terra cotta coping. The Bloom plant is also architecturally significant as the only remaining example of a large-scale textile factory in New London.

The period of significance begins in 1919 when Building No. 1 was constructed and ends in 1949, when the Templeton Company, the last large-scale employer at this site, vacated the building. Three of the existing Bloom Silk Company factory buildings were constructed within this period of significance and are considered to be contributing to the significance of the complex as a whole. The addition was constructed over a period of time between 1920 and 1960. The design, materials and method of construction are at odds with the other buildings and does not contribute to the overall significance of the complex.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: Industry

The Edward Bloom Silk Company meets Criterion A at the local level of significance for its association with the silk manufacturing industry in New London. Edward Bloom, a notable silk manufacturer in Paterson, New Jersey was brought to New London through his connections with members of the local Chamber of Commerce, some of whom were silk manufacturers. Silk and velvet manufacturing were important economic drivers and wage producers in southeastern Connecticut and contributed considerably to the expansion of New London's manufacturing base in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. From 1919 to 1936, Bloom employed hundreds of local workers, many of whom were recent immigrants and women. After Bloom, the Templeton

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Corporation continued to use the space to produce radio and television transmitters for the military and consumer markets from 1945 to 1949 (Figure 5).

Edward Bloom's Beginnings in the "Silk City"

Edward Bloom (1867-1957) came to Paterson, New Jersey as a member of a large community of Jewish immigrants that arrived from the western settlements of Imperial Russia, then known as "the Pale". Like other depressed rural peoples in late-nineteenth-century Europe, these Jewish settlers were drawn to the Polish wool-textile-producing cities of Bialystok and Lodz in search of industrial work.³ However, beginning in the 1880s, Pogroms (a series of large-scale, destructive, and often deadly riots aimed at the Jewish population) forced thousands of Russian Jews to leave the country for the United States. Paterson, New Jersey and its established silk industry attracted many of these workers who were already skilled in weaving wool. By 1913, 5,000 Jewish men and women worked in Paterson's silk industry, which by that time was known as the "Silk City".⁴ Edward Bloom arrived in Paterson in 1886. While it is unclear what Bloom did for work prior to his arrival, we know that he had amassed some wealth and business connections within his first decades of residency. Paterson newspaper articles indicate that Bloom purchased looms to engage in silk production as early as 1901 and he partnered with the veteran silk producer Samuel J. Aronsohn to establish the Aronsohn-Bloom Silk Company in 1904.⁵ In 1912, Bloom also incorporated the United Throwing Company with capital stock valued at \$25,000. His partners in that endeavor were Harry Aronsohn and his eldest son Abram Bloom.⁶

The following year was a challenge for Bloom when work was interrupted for over six months by the Paterson Silk Strike of 1913. To increase workflow and decrease costs—a process known as stretching—many Paterson silk manufactures adopted high-speed automatic looms, and because these looms required less skill and attention to operate, various companies demanded their weavers to oversee four looms simultaneously. The weavers were accustomed to working two or three looms at a time, but the addition of a fourth loom was a tipping point. Not only was the process of running several looms dangerous, but weavers were paid no more for their extra production. Job security became a major issue as the number of workers required to run a textile plant decreased. Automatic looms also led to an overall degradation of worker skill and thus the decrease in workers' ability to place demands on their employers.⁷

³ David S. Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* (London: Cambridge University Press), 1969.

⁴ Roni Seibel Liebowitz "The Silk Mills" Jewish History of Paterson, New Jersey.
https://kehillalinks.jewishgen.org/paterson/silk_mills.htm

⁵ "Bills of Sale" *The News*, October 29, 1901, 2.; "*The Blue Book*" *Textile Directory of the United States and Canada*. Davison Publishing Company, 1910.

⁶ *Silk Volume 6*, New York, NY: Silk Publishing Company, December 1912, 11

⁷ David Montgomery, *Workers' Control in America: Studies in the History of Work, Technology, and Labor Struggles* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Herbert G Gutman, *Work, Culture, and Society in Industrializing America: Essays in American Working-Class and Social History* (New York: Knopf: Distributed by Random House, 1976); David Montgomery, *The Fall of the House of Labor: The Workplace, the State, and American Labor Activism, 1865-1925* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987); Harry. Braverman, *Labor*

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

The strike began January 17, 1913 and quickly became city-wide, crippling Paterson's local industry. Despite garnishing national attention and gaining support from the International Workers of the World (IWW), the workers were starving and returned to work on July 28. Though the workers returned to their stations, the strike had a lasting effect on Paterson's silk industry and many large mill owners left the city for less politicized climates.⁸

Bloom weathered the strike and earned the accolades of his contemporaries who considered him one of the "Lions" of the Silk Industry, which was a play on the name of the French city of Lyons, famous for producing silk. Bloom was also known for his philanthropy and involvement in affairs of the City Government and within the local Jewish community. He served as Chairman of the Building Committee for the Paterson's Young Men's Hebrew Association and was instrumental in the construction of a YMHA building in that city in 1922.⁹ His personal success is evident from the federal census of 1930 that indicates Bloom was living alongside other silk merchants on Park Avenue in a house valued at \$65,000, more than double the price of any of his neighbors. That house was designed by noted Paterson architect Frederick Wesley Wentworth who happened to be a respected mill designer responsible for several silk mills in Paterson.

The Silk Industry in New London

The Cheney Brothers' Silk Mills in Manchester were at the center of Connecticut's silk industry throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, but southeastern Connecticut and New London in particular, also had a significant history of silk and velvet manufacturing. The largest of the New London concerns was the Brainerd & Armstrong Company located at No. 1 Water Street. The firm was organized in September 22, 1879, with a capital of \$60,000 by James P. Brainerd of Hartford, Benjamin A. Armstrong of New London, and Leonard O. Smith of Philadelphia. The company's annual production was valued at \$300,000 and employed 125 workers. The company also held interests in silk mills at Florence and Leeds, Massachusetts.¹⁰ The Brainerd & Armstrong Silk Company "was the first in the United States to produce fast color embroidery silks to stand washing with soap and hot water, without injury."¹¹ The New London Wash Silk Company was another local concern started in 1894 with only seven workers, but by 1912 they employed 100 hands.¹²

In the early 20th century, the demand for silk continued to grow; silk was fashionable and considered the "fabric of choice" for society ladies; American manufacturers imported as much

and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1975).

⁸ Emma Goldman *Paterson Silk Strike of 1913* American Experience

<https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/goldman-paterson-silk-strike-1913/>

⁹ "Deal Closed for Site for New \$250,000 Home of YMHA" *The News*, November 25, 1922, 1.

¹⁰ Duane Hamilton Hurd. *History of New London County, Connecticut: With Biographical Sketches of Many of Its Pioneers and Prominent Men*. J.W. Lewis & Company, 1882, 214.

¹¹ Robert Decker, *Whaling City: A History of New London*, Guilford, CT: Globe Pequot Press, 222.

¹² Decker, 134.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

raw silk as England, France, Germany and Italy combined.¹³ Following World War I, the textile industry in southeastern Connecticut, which was focused on silk and velvet manufacturing, was booming. American silk exports tripled during World War I and brought unprecedented growth to the industry. Silk and velvet manufacturing paid the most wages of any industry in New London county. In 1918, total wages were \$3,437,860, second only to firearms and cutlery at \$2,561,200, and cotton at \$2,197,728. In New London alone the silk and velvet industry paid \$1,017,100 of the total \$6,980,500 in wages and produced \$4,975,000 worth of products of the \$20,633,000 sold by the city's industries.¹⁴

Bloom's Move to New London

Strikes continued to plague the Aronsohn-Bloom plant in Paterson through 1918. Bloom's move to New London may have been a strategy to diversify his workforce away from what many considered to be a radicalized labor climate of Paterson. However, it was Bloom's connection to Benjamin Armstrong (1843-1929), one of the leading silk manufacturers in the northeastern United States and an active member in the New London Chamber of Commerce that most likely brought him to New London.

Both Bloom and Armstrong were noted as specialists in finishing and dyeing silk broadcloth.¹⁵ Armstrong and Bloom inevitably crossed paths at national and regional trade shows, and they are often listed as having attended the same events in trade publications from the period. An article in the *American Silk Journal* illustrates that both men served on the "Dinner Committee" of the 43rd Silk Banquet for the Silk Association of America and were seated at adjacent tables in an event held at the grand ballroom of the Biltmore Hotel on February 11, 1915.¹⁶

Several contemporary sources mention that the Chamber of Commerce was responsible for bringing Bloom and other businesses such as the Groton Iron Works into New London after World War I.¹⁷ A New Year's Day article in the *Norwich Bulletin* written by then New London Chamber of Commerce President Theodore Bowdenwein stated that, "New London can look forward to 1919 with satisfaction and forward to 1920 with hope and confidence." Listed among the "great building" projects planned for the coming year were "the \$500,000 high school, the Murphy Amusement Company new theater, Methodist church, [the] Bloom Company silk mill, [and] Connecticut College dormitory."¹⁸ The 1920 business directory states that the Chamber "[represented] Six Hundred citizens of new London seeking to serve the community and advance the industrial and commercial development of eastern Connecticut." Armstrong clearly had a pattern of enticing successful operations into moving to New London. He tried to sell Henry Ford

¹³ "Connecticut's Mulberry Craze | Connecticut History | a CTHumanities Project," accessed November 23, 2019, <https://connecticuthistory.org/connecticuts-mulberry-craze/>.

¹⁴ "New London County in 1918" *Norwich Bulletin* January 1, 1919, p14.

¹⁵ Federal Census, 1930.

¹⁶ The American Silk Journal Volume 43, March 1915 supplement, p 46

¹⁷ *The North Adams Transcript* March 17, 1922, 11.

¹⁸ "Eastern Connecticut Hits the Billion Mark" *Norwich Bulletin*, January 1, 1920, 15.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

land he owned in near Waterford to construct an automobile plant, but Ford chose to instead build his northeast factory in Kearny, New Jersey.¹⁹

Other evidence demonstrates the Bloom-Armstrong connection. In 1901, a survey on file with the City Clerk of New London shows that Benjamin Armstrong owned land immediately adjacent, to that on which Bloom eventually built his factory (Figure 2). On November 15, 1919 Edward Bloom purchased that land from George B. Prest, Executor and Trustee of the estate of his father Edward Prest. This included several residential building lots (numbers 4 through 13 on Garfield Avenue and 28 through 38 on Chester Street).²⁰ These were located along Elm Street, which once bisected the block where the factory buildings stand today.

Notable is the fact that George B. Prest and Benjamin Armstrong were both long-serving officers at the National Bank of Commerce; Armstrong was the bank's President and Prest was Vice President.²¹ Further, an advertisement in the local business directory from 1920 shows that the National Bank of Commerce served as Treasurer for the Chamber of Commerce.²² So in every sense Armstrong and Prest were connected to and stood to gain professionally and personally from the industrial development of this formerly undeveloped area west of downtown New London.

In the case of Armstrong, Bloom's arrival in New London provided an even more direct gain. Bloom completed all aspects of broadcloth manufacturing in Paterson, including dyeing and finishing, but in New London it was reported that "[Bloom's] company will not do any dying at the present time, having made arrangements with the Brainard & Armstrong Company to do this for them."²³

The Edward Bloom Silk Company in New London

In November of 1919, the Abraham Bloom Silk Company took out a permit for a new factory building to be erected on Garfield Avenue.²⁴ The *Norwich Bulletin* reported that the "Ground has already been broken for the structure which will be of brick, two stories high [and] 430 by 45 feet."²⁵ Various reports indicate that the permits were initially taken out by Abraham or Abram Bloom (Edward's eldest son), but there is no further discussion of Abram in relation to this site.

It was an opportune time to build a new factory in New London, which by that time was becoming a modern city with a diversified economic base. In his book, *The Whaling City: A History of New London*, Robert Owen Decker states that "By the 1920s the population reached 25,000 and enjoyed the facilities of a modern, advanced city: street cars, new schools, paved streets, a park system,

¹⁹ Decker, 139.

²⁰ New London Land Records Volume 138, 370.

²¹ New London, Niantic, and Waterford Directory Volume 16, 1905 Price, Lee & Co. Harvard MA., 288.

²² Directory of New London, Niantic and Waterford" 1921 Directory Harvard, MA.: Price and Lee

²³ "A New Silk Mill" *Hartford Courant* March 6, 1921, 17.

²⁴ Little mention is made of Abraham or (Abram) Bloom regarding this plant, he did however have several operations in New York City and Paterson.

²⁵ "New London" *Norwich Bulletin* November 4, 1919, 8.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

hospitals, Ocean Beach, a municipal building, new post office and a State Pier.”²⁶ The area where Bloom built his factory was targeted for industrial development. Most manufacturing concerns were concentrated along the Thames or near the city’s downtown. Several factories were constructed in the area along Garfield Avenue in this period including Columbia Leather Goods and the Berkowitz Brothers Shirt Company. The 1925 Sanborn Map shows that an ice-making operation and storage facility for the Southern Northeast Ice Company was built across Truman’s Brook and just west of Bloom’s new plant.

Bloom incorporated the Edward Bloom Company of New London on August 31, 1920.²⁷ On August 25, 1920, the land records indicate a second transaction between Bloom and the Stafford Company.²⁸ No address is given for the transaction, but the Stafford Company made automatic looms out of Readville, Massachusetts, and one of their primary client bases was in Paterson. In 1920, the company was producing automatic looms in addition to standard silk looms and dobbie looms.²⁹

By December 31, 1920, Bloom’s Building No. 1 was complete and the looms (138 to begin) were being installed.³⁰ An article from the *Day* indicates that the “Blum” Silk mill will likely be in service before spring. It noted that the mill will add a “clean and well-paid industry to New London.”³¹ *The Hartford Courant* noted that, “The Edward Bloom silk factory one of the newest of several industries brought to this [New London] through the efforts of the Chamber of Commerce started work this week with 75 hands. The company came here from New Jersey and erected a three-story (sic) modern brick mill building capable of housing from 500 to 600 hands.”³² The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from 1921 shows the original footprint. The boiler house and ell fronting onto Garfield Avenue were both in place by this time (Figure 3).

In November of 1921, Bloom’s focus shifted toward Connecticut as he dissolved his partnership in Aronsohn & Bloom, “One of the city’s most progressive silk manufacturing concerns....” in order to take “a step back” from day to day operations there. The article mentioned that he was maintaining his mill in Paterson under the Edward Bloom Company and his concern in New London which he operated “with his son.” Mr. Blum was described as one of the most “...popular men in the silk manufacturing business in [Paterson].”³³ In 1922, an industry guide listed the Edward Bloom as President and Secretary and Charles E. Bloom as Treasurer of the Edward Bloom Silk Company which operated with \$55,000 in capital. The shop was described as running 138 box looms on electric power. Their broad silks were sold directly through their commission

²⁶ Decker, 139.

²⁷ “Special Acts and Resolutions of the General Ass...” Accessed October 7, 2019.

<https://collections.ctdigitalarchive.org/islandora/object/30002%3A21986107#page/1135/mode/1up>.

²⁸ New London Land Records PP5/19. No address given.

²⁹ *Silk Volume 12*, New York, NY: Silk Publishing Company.

³⁰ “Blum Silk Mill Plans” *The Day* December 21, 1920, 12.

³¹ “The Day - Google News Archive Search,” December 31, 1920.

<https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1915&dat=19201231&id=iqktAAAIBAJ&sjid=qHUFAAAIBAJ&pg=4029,5996003>.

³² “A New Silk Mill” *Hartford Courant* March 6, 1921, 17.

³³ “Important Change in Silk Organization” *The News* Paterson November 23, 1921, 1.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

house in New York City. It was noted that Bloom also continued to operate an additional mill in Paterson.³⁴

Within a year Bloom expanded his New London plant quickly to meet the demand for silk broadcloth. An additional weaving building (Building No. 2) was started in April 1922, and further expansion of the plant was planned for later that same year. By November, it was reported that the side walls were “well up” and erected by a Newark, New Jersey contractor. The size of the new building was reported to be two stories, of “brick mill construction” and measured 56’ by 157’. The article further stated that, “It is expected within a year to further enlarge the plant by another addition fronting on Elm Street.”³⁵

The New Jersey contractor mentioned above was Peter S. Van Kirk, an industrial builder out of Newark.³⁶ Van Kirk learned the art of silk weaving early in his career but moved into carpentry and eventually the construction industry after studying architecture as an apprentice of A.W. Piaget.³⁷ Van Kirk’s interest in the silk industry persisted and his firm designed and constructed dozens of mills in that city including the Doherty Silk Company Mill at Lakeview, which was considered in 1910 to be the largest broad silk weave shed in operation in the industry.”³⁸ Van Kirk and Bloom would have been well acquainted from Paterson where Van Kirk had offices and a large lumber yard. Van Kirk’s firm constructed dozens of industrial buildings throughout the city.³⁹

In November of 1922, Bloom obtained a permit to erect a third section of the plant on the New London site. It was described in local industry magazines as being two stories in height, 238 x 56 and of brick and concrete construction.⁴⁰ It was built at a cost of \$80,000.⁴¹ With the success of his business in New London, Bloom continued to expand his operation there. Local papers reported that, “The Edward Bloom Silk Company, one of the ten new industries which the Chamber of Commerce has brought to town in the past three years, has just completed the erection of its second mill building and is now commencing work on the third.”⁴²

At the time of Bloom’s arrival in New London the three primary New London silk manufacturers in 1921 were the Brainerd & Armstrong, the H-K-H Silk Company and the Edward Bloom Silk Company. A local newspaper reported that all three of these concerns were operating on full-time schedules by April of 1921 and that their orders received would keep the mills busy through fall or later. It went on to say, “These silk concerns were the first of 34 local industries and plants to

³⁴ Daniel S. Mercieri *The Silk Guide: A Technical Compendium of the Silk Industry*. New York, NY: Silk Guide, Inc., 1922.

³⁵ *Norwich Bulletin* 11.28.22, 8

³⁶ *Textile World* Volume 62, 12/2/22, 103.

³⁷ “Our Business Men”, *The News*, Paterson, N.J., January 8, 1897.

³⁸ “P. S. Van Kirk Company”, *Silk Volume 4, No. 1*, November 1910, 55.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Textile World* Volume 62, November 28, 1922, 111.; Contemporary sources conflict on size of the size of the original buildings.

⁴¹ *The Textile Digest*, vol. 2 (J.H. Goodwin & Company, 1922).

⁴² *Stone & Webster Journal* (Stone & Webster, 1922), 182.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

show a full resumption of business since the beginning of the industrial slump last fall”.⁴³ Brainerd & Armstrong and H-K-H were both the results of mergers of several existing operations.

Following World War I, a trend toward consolidation in the industry led to the merger of several small silk companies in the northeast. The H-K-H Silk Company of New London was formed through consolidation of the Hammond-Knowlton, Eureka Silk Manufacturing Company, and the New London Wash Silk Company.⁴⁴ The Nonotuck Silk Company of Northampton, Massachusetts was acquired by Brainerd & Armstrong of New London in 1921 to form one of the country’s largest silk manufacturers: Corticelli Silk. Corticelli produced dress fabrics, silk and rayon silk hosiery, thread and automobile curtains in New London factories through the 1930s.

Despite Bloom’s success, a series of strikes began only a year after commencing his New London operation. Conditions for workers were difficult and they were tasked with overseeing several automatic looms at once. Accidents inevitably occurred, and when they did compensation was often minimal. One of Bloom’s employees by the name of Paul Loverde had his left palm lacerated and received only \$7.50 in compensation for his injury.⁴⁵ In September of 1923, one hundred of Bloom’s silk weavers went out on strike due to Bloom’s refusal to raise the wage from seven to ten cents per yard. Bloom eventually compromised and workers returned after several weeks.

The following September workers were again on strike. On September 20, 1924, Gaudi Garbaccio, superintendent of the mill representing the two hundred striking workers, requested that day shifts be provided in place of night work with no reduction in pay. It was reported that “no outside agitator was involved” in the strike.⁴⁶ Seven days later a “brief and stormy meeting” was held between the committee representing the striking workers and Edward Bloom himself but ended without a result. Bloom stated that “settlement in the near future seems hopeless” and “the probability of closing the plant in a short time seems imminent.”⁴⁷ One hundred weavers had gone out on strike but the same number of winders and warpers were thrown out of work because they had no stock to work with. The strike lasted two weeks and four days and ended only after management conceded to “a two-cent increase on satin work and a one cent per yard increase on the production of double satin.”⁴⁸

A review of the 1930 Federal Census records shows that silk weavers in New London were mostly first-generation workers from Italy, Germany, Ireland, Canada and Syria. Garbaccio himself was born in Italy, where the majority of Bloom’s workers were also born. Whole families were often employed by the mill with many men working as loom fixers and weavers and women as warpers and weavers. Older children, some as young as 16, were employed as warpers, setting up the silk threads on each loom before the weaving process began.

⁴³ “New London Silk Mills Rushed with Business” April 27, 1921, *New Britain Herald*, 1.

⁴⁴ Robert Owen Decker, *The Whaling City: A History of New London*, 2017, 135,
<https://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&scope=site&db=nlebk&db=nlabk&AN=1706005>.

⁴⁵ *Norwich Bulletin*, July 6, 1922, 8.

⁴⁶ “Strike Complicated” *New Britain Herald* September 20, 1924, 5.

⁴⁷ “Bloom Mill Strike Tightly Deadlocked” *New Britain Herald*, September 27, 1924, 5.

⁴⁸ “New London Silk Mill Strike Ends” *Connecticut Labor News* October 11, 1924 p 8.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

In 1926, the Connecticut Bureau of Labor Statistics reported that, “The coming back of the silk industry as it has is due to the wisdom of furnishing fashions which will have the allurements of not being too cheap but fair enough in price to suit [those of] medium means. Reports show briskness in silk business – full departments, overtime work all steadily prospering.” That same year Edward Bloom expanded his operation in Connecticut to a former cotton manufacturing plant known as the Putnam Manufacturing Company.⁴⁹

Despite a boom in the industry, labor troubles continued to plague Bloom’s mills. In May of 1926, the entire force of 100 weavers walked out leaving the same number of warpers, spinners, and fixers still employed.⁵⁰ The strike started spontaneously when Bloom cut wages by 25 percent but attracted the support of various local groups like the United Front Committee and the International Labor Defense (ILO). The ILO provided legal defense to anyone arrested in the strike. Ella Reeve Bloor, socialist leader appeared in New London to support the strikers who fought the cutbacks imposed by Bloom.⁵¹ A group from the Communist Workers Party came to New London and challenged the treatment of workers by straw bosses on the mill floor and demanded recognition of a union that workers with respect. Workers returned when Bloom met their demands. However, Bloom began to lessen his stock in New London. The same month of the strike, Bloom moved machinery from his New London factory to a rented factory in Putnam, Connecticut during a strike which saw employees out of work for several weeks. “The [Putnam] plant will expand and operate on a 24-hour schedule as soon as machinery is installed.”⁵²

As in all manufacturing sectors, things changed drastically after the economic crash in October of 1929; luxury goods took a particular hit. To illustrate how rapidly silk manufacturing declined; in 1930 there were 100,000 silk looms operating in the United States and by 1950 there were only 3,000 in operation.⁵³ In Connecticut, even the most established silk manufactories struggled to stay in business. In 1931, the Cheney Brothers posted a \$2.5 million loss, and to \$5 million soon afterward. Cheney Brothers filed for bankruptcy in 1935 and never recovered.⁵⁴ Brainard & Armstrong closed their operation in 1930, but prior to its demise it had revolutionized its workforce by establishing a pension plan and providing a 70 percent salary increase.⁵⁵ It was purchased in 1930 by the Belding-Heminway Company but that company remained unsuccessful in New London. They left New London in 1934 and moved all operations to their plant in Watertown, Connecticut.⁵⁶

⁴⁹ *Connecticut Bureau of Labor Statistics for the Period Ended June 30, 1926 State of Connecticut Doc No 33, 32nd Report* Hartford, CT: Published by the State, 1926.

⁵⁰ New Britain Herald “New London Strike” 4/12/26 p 10.

⁵¹ Richard Lenzi *Facing Toward The Dawn: The Italian Anarchists of New London*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 2019, 158.

⁵² “Edward Bloom Moving to Putnam” *Hartford Courant*, Hartford, CT, May 15, 1919, 2.

⁵³ CT history.org.

⁵⁴ David Reinlander “Silk an Important Thread in States's Fabric” *Hartford Courant* May 21, 1999 <https://www.courant.com/news/connecticut/hc-xpm-1999-05-21-9905210388-story.html>

⁵⁵ Silk 2007, 123

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

The Depression only worsened Bloom's labor problems. Shifting his attention to Putnam did not lessen Bloom's labor issues. On July 14, 1931, 500 workers walked out of Bloom's Putnam mill. They demanded a reduction from a 55-hour work week to 48 hours with no reduction in wages. They were supported by the National Textile Workers Union. Notwithstanding the labor troubles plaguing his plants, that same year Bloom invented and patented a "slub detector" that separated out the "weak and inferior threads" from the silk process. It operated on the guide of a winder and removed all lumps from the weaving process which resulted in a much smoother and better grade of silk.⁵⁷

Despite the troubles Bloom seemed to have with his workers, he took a favorable view of unions. In 1933, he was quoted in a Paterson newspaper as stating, "Because of lack of control they are starving...both the working people and the businessman...I do not know anyone better able to [gain control] than the unions. I prefer unionism to either starvation or communism."⁵⁸ In his long career in New Jersey and Connecticut, Bloom had encountered both.

Bloom's New London plant was finally closed in 1936.⁵⁹ Bloom's lawyer, Morris Lubchansky, announced on June 4 of that year that the mill would close as soon as the current set of orders were completed. At the time there were 350 employees that were thrown out of work, but one contemporary newspaper article stated that the factory employed 1200 people at its peak of operations. Bloom blamed high taxes rather than problems with his workers for the closure. The local newspapers reported that Bloom had made unsuccessful overtures to the city to reduce his tax rate.⁶⁰ The company's taxes were reduced by \$30,000 in 1935, but that reduction proved to be insufficient and the plant closed its doors for good on June 19, 1936. The remainder of Bloom's operations were taken over by his factories in Putnam and Paterson, New Jersey. By August 1, 1936 Bloom conveyed title of the mill to the Savings Bank of New London for settlement of the 100,000 mortgage on the plant. Bloom also paid the city \$7,475 in back taxes and \$574 in accrued interest.⁶¹

The Putnam plant was manufacturing rayon by this time and was cited as an example in a series of Congressional Hearings brought before the Commission on Labor. The goal of the Commission was to rehabilitate and stabilize labor conditions in the textile industry."⁶² However, newly perfected synthetic materials, such as rayon and nylon, which were stronger, less expensive, and easier to manufacture, inherently destabilized the silk industry. At the same time, the National Labor Relations Act or "Wagner Act" was passed. This act allowed workers to form a labor union without threat of retaliation and protected workers from coercion or discrimination if they argued publicly in favor of unionization. It also required companies to negotiate directly with employee

⁵⁷ "Paterson Silk Man Invents Device to Separate Fibers" *The News* Paterson, NJ. July 20, 1931 5.

⁵⁸ "Leading Silk Manufacturer Says Industry Depends on Unionism" *Morning Call*, Paterson, NJ, November 23, 1933, 8.

⁵⁹ "Over taxation to Close New London Silk Mill" *Hartford Courant*, Hartford, CT. June 5, 1936, 1.

⁶⁰ "Blames High Taxes for Closing Plant" *Times Union*, Albany, NY, June 16, 1936, 8.

⁶¹ "Day's Business" *Hartford Courant*, August 1, 1936, 12.

⁶² "Hearings Before the Committee on Labor, House of Representatives, 74th Congress First Session, H. R. 4884 H R. 6450 US Printing Office Washington, DC, 1935.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

representatives. The economic conditions brought about by the prolonged economic downturn and the passage of this legislation induced many textile manufacturers to close their shops for good.

Bloom and his wife resided in Paterson until he retired to Florida in 1940 where he died in 1957. His obituary stated that he was owner of “one of the pioneering textile plants” in Paterson (Aronsohn & Bloom).⁶³ He was also recognized as a well-known philanthropist; his obituary notes that he was a charter member of B’nai B’rith and a 32nd degree Mason in the Paterson-Orange Lodge.⁶⁴

Manufacturing Concerns after Bloom

According to author Robert Owen Decker, during World War II, the former Bloom factory was leased to the army by the Savings Bank of New London, but no specific use was given by the author and no such use could be identified.⁶⁵ He may have been referring to the Templetone Radio Company. The company produced radar equipment for the war effort and once the war was over, they used the space to produce radios and early televisions for civilian consumption. In 1942, the company converted to manufacture equipment for the U.S. Signal Corps, the Air Corps, and the Navy. The company was headed by Oscar Dane, Eli Dane, Max Epstein and Samuel Glick. In 1942, Oscar and Eli Dane were partners in the firm.⁶⁶ Oscar Dane moved the electronics division of the Mystic-based company to the Bloom’s Garfield Avenue plant in 1944. Oscar and Eli Dane founded the Templetone Radio Manufacturing Corporation, a division of the earlier company, that same year with partner Dale Pollack of Stonington.⁶⁷ Oscar Dane was a leader in the Jewish Community having arrived in the United States from Russia in 1917. He lived in Manhattan but was a founding member of the Beth-El Synagogue in New London.⁶⁸

The *Day* reported in 1944 that Mayor Kelley said, “We are now engaged in a great war and the city of New London can be especially proud of its contributing in man and woman power, and in the products which its diversified plants are producing. One of the most important implements of war is radar.”⁶⁹ The company made AM consoles and transmitters, audio frequency amplifiers, inter-communicators and AM-FM Table models.⁷⁰ Temple Consumer Radios were produced out of this plant from 1946-1948 and the plant closed in 1949. An article in a Hartford newspaper reported on what Oscar Dane called the “first television radio” which was built at the New London plant in 1948. The television could be hooked up to a conventional console radio to display images as well as transmit AM/FM signals and play records. It had a built-in magnifier lens that produced

⁶³ “Edward Bloom, Former Silk Manufacturer” *Herald-News* Passaic, NJ September 7, 1909, 18.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Decker, 141.

⁶⁶ “Connecticut Cabinet Corporation”, *Stonington Industries Tricentennial 1649-1949* Stonington, CT: Industries Committee, nd.

⁶⁷ “Certificates of Incorporation” *Hartford Courant*, August 15, 1944, 18.

⁶⁸ Oscar Dane, a Leader in Jewish Community” *New York Times*, December 25, 1987, 36.

⁶⁹ *The Day* 12/23/1944. Quoted in the Architectural Resource Survey of New London completed by Patricia DeVoe date unknown.

⁷⁰ *Electronics* July-December 1945. McGraw Hill Publication, 18.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

the effect of a 52 square inch picture. Dane expected this new invention to “build employment up to a new record high.”⁷¹

The following year, instead of employing record numbers of workers, the Templeton plant in New London had temporarily closed. Dane blamed the closure on the Federal Communications Commission, who “put off assigning definite frequencies to the television board.” This interrupted Dane’s plan to mass market his various models of television sets and the plant permanently closed its doors in New London on April 22, 1949.⁷²

Following Templeton’s tenure, there were a series of tenants occupying the space. During the late 1950s the property was owned by the Garfield Holding Corporation, which appeared to rent space to series of tenants beginning with the Garfield Belt Company, which made canvas belts for the United States military. Other tenants included the National Foreman’s Institute, Inc. and the MAFRO Products Corporation. MAFRO was incorporated in September of 1949 with Charles A. Mansker as chief officer.⁷³ Charles Mansker reported in December of 1950 that his company had received orders for 30,000 transport straps from the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and an order for another 750,000 carrying straps made of brass and webbing. The company moved in March of 1950 from New York City to New London and at that time employed 50 people, although it was expected that they would hire an additional 200 workers to fulfill the two government contracts described above.

The factory has been used by an inconsistent stream of manufacturers during the second half of the 20th century, but none that reached the levels of employment or production achieved by the earlier companies.

Criterion C: Architecture

The Edward Bloom Silk Company factory meets Criterion C at the local level as an intact example of an early twentieth-century textile mill designed to accommodate the process of silk broadcloth manufacturing. Constructed during a period when most northern textile manufactures were closing or had moved operations to the southern United States, the Bloom factory buildings are unique examples of 1920s-textile factory construction in New London. The buildings differentiate themselves from more typical late-nineteenth century mills in several significant ways, such as being only two stories in height, having a long, narrow design, and exterior water closet towers and internal stairwells set at each end of the building to maximize floor space. The long, low design of the buildings fit well on the narrow plot of land cobbled together from several building lots. Bloom’s purchase afforded him a narrow construction footprint, one that was bounded on the west by the natural feature of Truman’s Brook and on the east by the residential building lots lining Connecticut Avenue.

⁷¹ “Television Radio Embodies Several Unusual Features”, *Hartford Daily Courant*, November 11, 1949, 21.

⁷² “Blames FCC”, *Naugatuck Daily News*, April 14, 1949, 11.

⁷³ ‘Gets Army Contract’ *Hartford Courant* December 10, 1950, 14.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

One important characteristic of early 20th century textile mills is the narrow width-to-length ratio. This allowed power to be transmitted through the line shafting that extended the length of the factory and drove the machinery. Bloom's looms were powered by electricity, but the same design persisted. The narrow width of the building also allowed natural light from the tall, 24-light windows to penetrate to the center of the building. The use of natural light remained important in electrified spaces and lowered costs associated with artificial lighting. The looms were arranged in horizontal rows with aisles between them, large enough to transport the bulky fabric once it was woven. Warping, weaving and winding were separated with weaving on the second floor and warping on the first. This segregation of tasks served a practical purpose but also enforced the segregation of the skilled labor force within the factory. Long aisles allowed for overseers to simultaneously watch the activity of dozens of workers. This was a design strategy commonly used in the early 20th century as Taylorism and scientific management became more widely implemented.⁷⁴

The long and low design of the complex coupled with the heavy timber structural system constructed of "slow burning" members was also meant to accommodate the force and vibration exerted by moving power looms. Bloom's weaving of broadcloth meant there was a need for open and flexible manufacturing space. The buildings' truss roof structure and central girts allowed for large open spaces conducive to the use of electric power looms. Despite the narrow footprint compared to some larger textile mills, they have greater expanses of unobstructed space. This open configuration was important since it could accommodate machines of varying designs.⁷⁵ Indeed, open and unobstructed space was so important, that there are no original interior bathrooms; instead external towers were constructed to house water closets.⁷⁶ Also, the two stair towers were confined to the far north and south ends of the buildings. On Building 1, the Boiler House and smokestack are confined to the far southern end and the office and silk storage vault were found at the far northern end of the building. The silk vault was a fireproof space designed to guard the valuable finished silk.

Many lofts, such as the former Brainard and Armstrong Building in New London (no longer extant but visible in historic post card images) were three or four stories in height (Figure 6). The upper spaces were utilized for lighter tasks such as finishing and dyeing. Since Bloom appeared to have no intention of finishing or dyeing silk at this site (given his agreement for Brainard and Armstrong to do these tasks for him), the buildings were constructed with floors meant for heavy machine use. Likewise, there were no separate buildings constructed for those purposes. Many early silk operations had ancillary dye houses on site, but again, this wasn't necessary for Bloom in New London. Even if he intended to expand into dyeing at a later date, his plants in Paterson show that his dyeing operations were located in entirely separate locations from the weaving.

⁷⁴ Taylorism was the process of breaking production processes down into a series of specific repeated steps designed to improve manufacturing efficiency. It was popularized by engineer Fred W. Taylor in the first decades of the 20th century.

⁷⁵ Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 3.

⁷⁶ This is another typical design solution in late 19th to early 20th c. mills.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

The buildings were constructed by well-known industrial builder Philip S. Van Kirk of Newark, New Jersey. P. S. Van Kirk spent his young adulthood learning silk weaving before entering the carpentry trade. He apprenticed with architect A. W. Piaget where he learned architectural drawing. By 1888 he started his own firm with partners Mersereau and Kay and by 1897 he had bought out his former partners and was well known for constructing several mills and municipal buildings in Paterson.⁷⁷ Van Kirk was perhaps best known for the construction of the Henry Doherty Silk Mill at Lakeview in Paterson, New Jersey, at the time considered to be “the largest broad silk weave shed in the industry.”⁷⁸

⁷⁷ “Our Business Men,” *The News*, Paterson, New Jersey, January 8, 1897, 1.

⁷⁸ *Silk*, Volume 4, Issue 55, No. 1, New York: McCready Publishing Company, November 1910.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

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Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

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Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

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Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

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Times Union, Albany, New York, 1936

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State agency
 - Federal agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.59 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 41.352772° N Longitude: -72.108326° W

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting: Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the nominated property includes the entire parcel at 90 Garfield Avenue designated by the New London Assessor's Office as record 95-E12-156-1. It is bounded on the east by the parcel propriety line, on the south by McDonald Street, on the west by the parcel property line, and on the north by Garfield Avenue (See Figure 2).

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes all of the existing buildings that were historically part of the Bloom Silk Company factory complex. The boundary was also drawn to exclude the surrounding residential properties on the northeast, east and southeast as well as the industrial buildings on the west and northwest, all of which were unrelated historically to the mill complex

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Stacey Vairo & Michael Forino
organization: Heritage Consultants, LLC
street & number: 55 E. Cedar Street
city or town: Newington state: CT zip code: 06111
e-mail: svairo@heritage-consultant.com
telephone: 203-217-5795
date: December 6, 2019

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

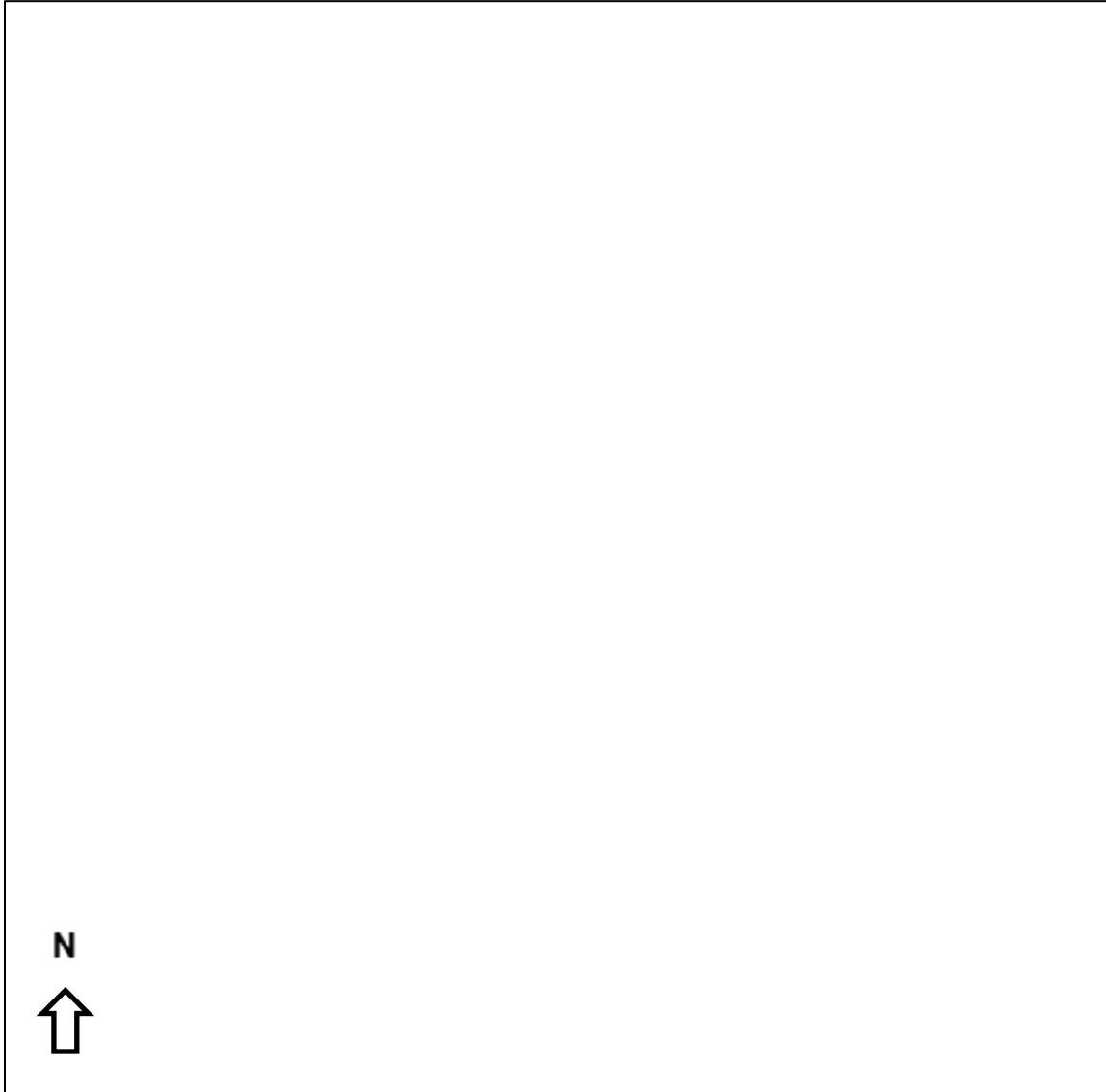
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Figure 1: Location of property shown on UGSG New London Quadrangle, 7.5 Minute Series, scale 1:24000.



Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

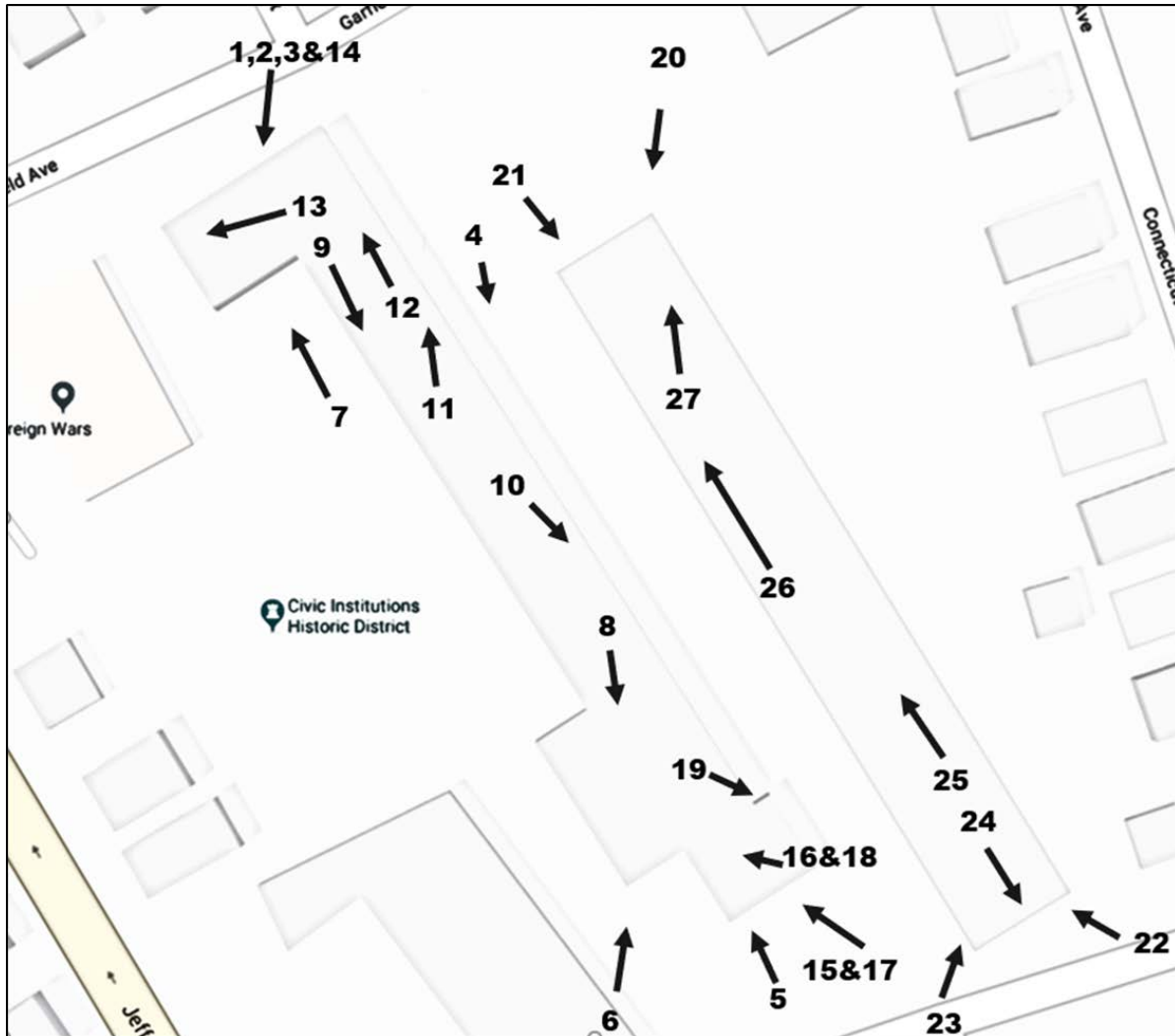
Figure 2: Bloom Silk Company Factory Complex Site Plan (Google Earth, 2020).



Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

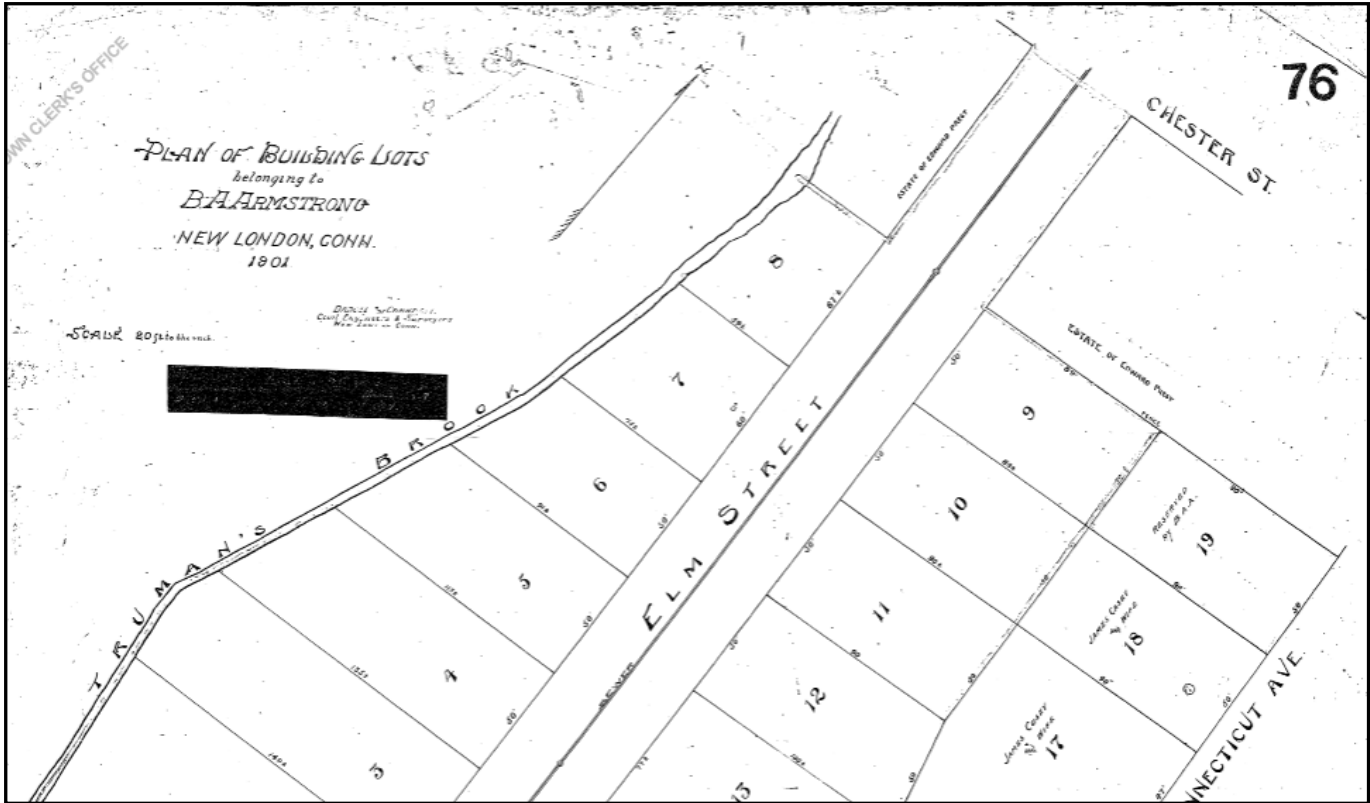
Figure 3: Photograph Sketch Map



Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

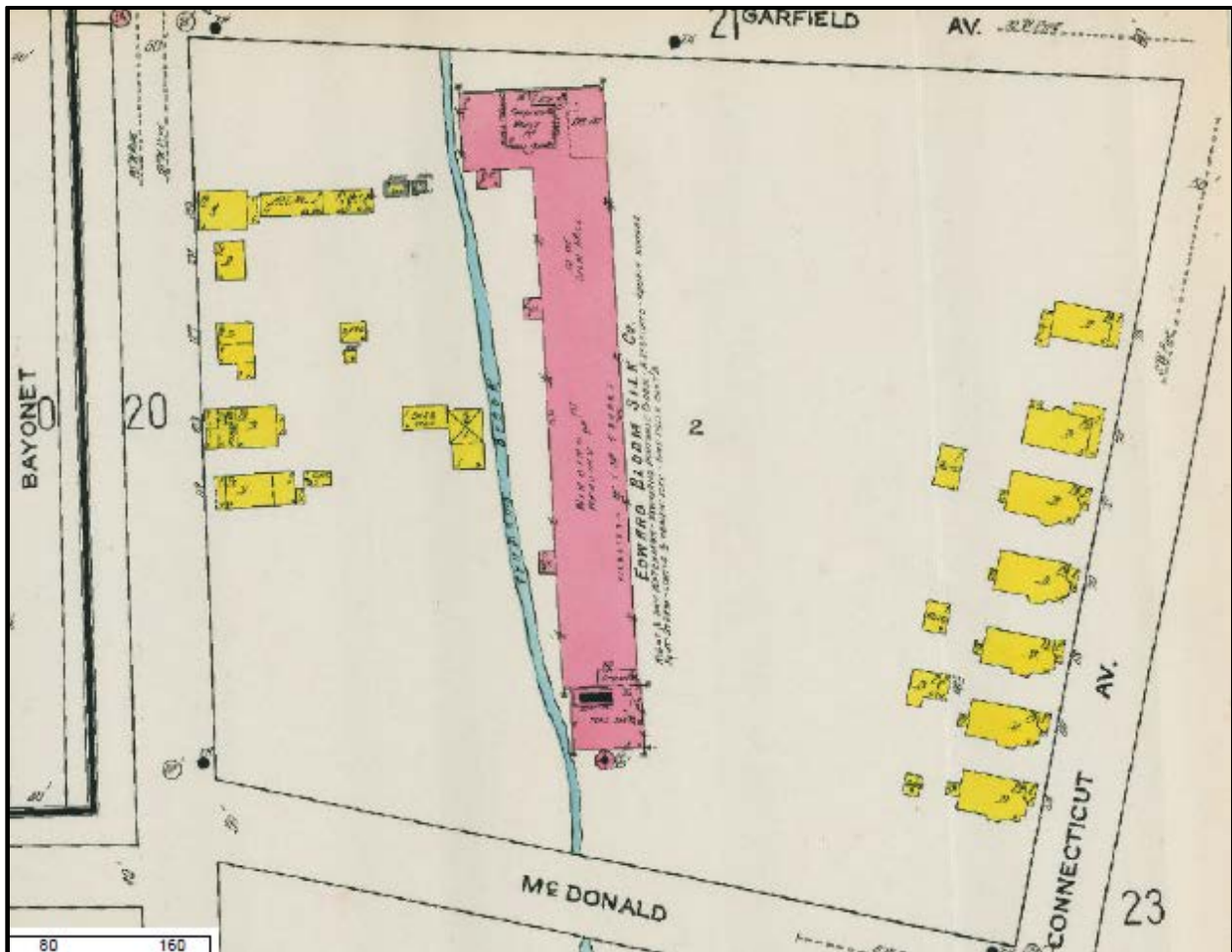
Figure 4: Scan of 1901 site plan showing B.A. Armstrong's landholding immediately adjacent to future Bloom Factory Site, 1901 (New London Clerk's Office).



Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

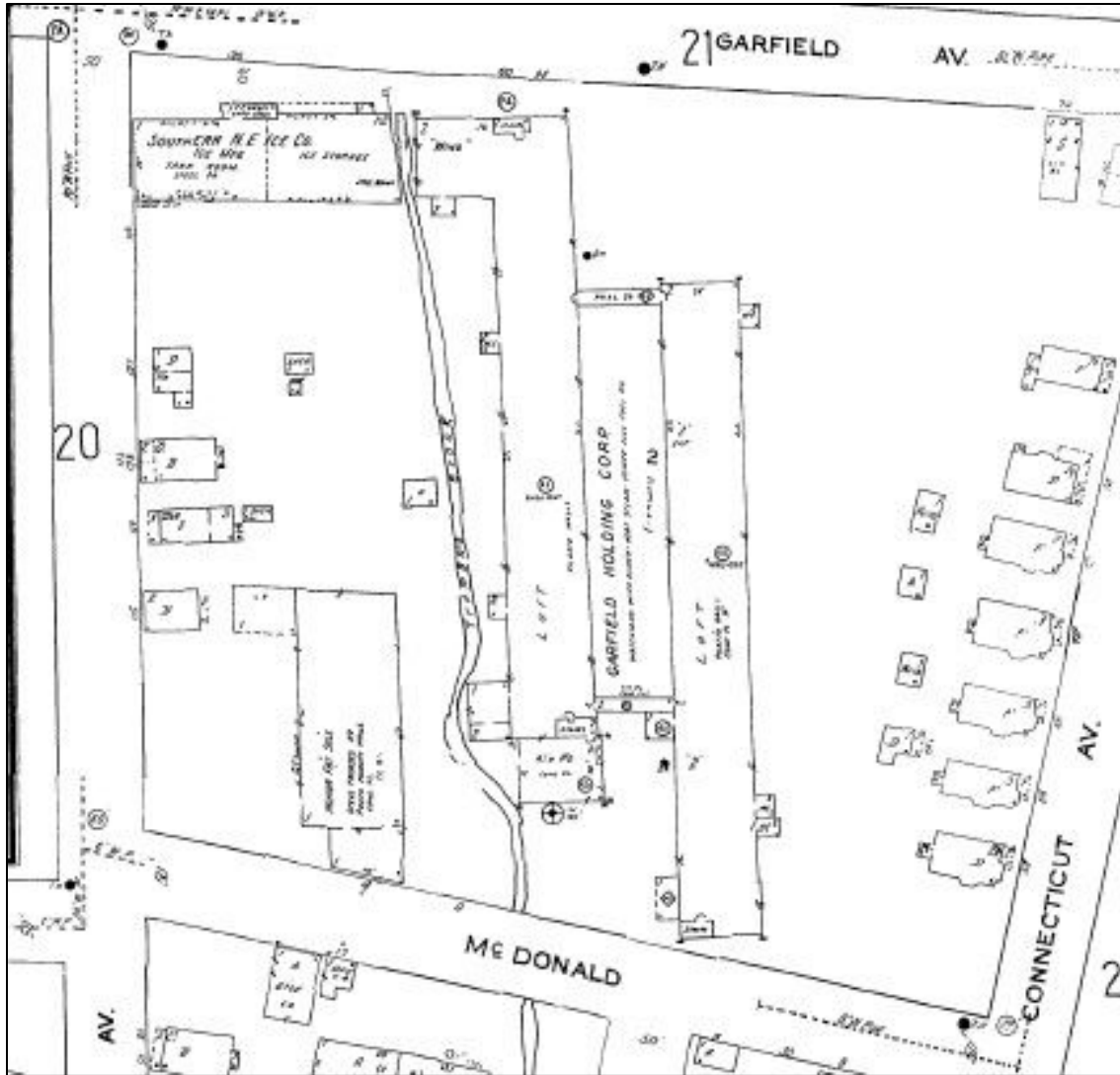
Figure 5: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from 1921 showing Building No. 1 and Building No. 2 (the Boiler House).



Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Figure 6: Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from 1951.



Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Figure 7: Ca. 1940 Temple Radio Advertisement.

You'll
hear your favorite stars
"IN PERSON"
via a postwar
TEMPLE RADIO

You, thanks to Temple acoustical advancements,
"tuning-in" with a postwar Temple Radio will be like
getting your favorite stars "in person" in your very
own living room—a new measure of total purity that
will add greatly to your hours radio enjoyment.

YOU'LL HEAR THEM "IN PERSON" WITH A

Temple
RADIO

TEMPLE RADIO MFG. CO. INC. NEW LONDON, CONN.
Where FM will also mean Finest Made

Wholesale Distributor
HARTFORD STOVE COMPANY
60 MORGAN ST., HARTFORD, CONN.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Figure 8: Historic Postcard Image of Brainerd and Armstrong Co. of New London.



Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory

City or Vicinity: New London

County: New London State: Connecticut

Photographer: Heritage Consultants, LLC

Date Photographed: October & December 2019

Photograph 1 of 27. North and eastern elevations of Building No. 1. (1919), camera facing southwest.

Photograph 2 of 27. North elevation (façade) of Building No. 1 (1919), camera facing southwest.

Photograph 3 of 27. Detail of portico on Building No. 1 (1919), camera facing southwest.

Photograph 4 of 27. Eastern elevation of Building No. 1 (1919), camera facing southwest.

Photograph 5 of 27. Southern Elevation of Building No. 1 (1919) (obscured by boiler house (1919), camera facing north.

Photograph 6 of 27. South and west elevations of Addition (ca.1920/1960), camera facing northeast.

Photograph 7 of 27. Southern Elevation of Building No. 1 Ell (1919), camera facing north.

Photograph 8 of 27. Existing exterior of Building No. 1 (1919), camera facing southeast into Addition (ca. 1920/1960).

Photograph 9 of 27. Interior first floor of Building No. 1 (1919), camera facing southwest.

Edward Bloom Silk Company Factory
Name of Property

New London, Connecticut
County and State

Photograph 10 of 27. Interior second floor of Building No. 1 (1919), camera facing southwest.

Photograph 11 of 27. Interior second floor of Building No. 1 (1919), camera facing northeast.

Photograph 12 of 27. Interior automatic fire door in Building No. 1 (1919), second floor, camera facing north.

Photograph 13 of 27. Interior of Building No. 1 ell (1919), second floor, camera facing northeast.

Photograph 14 of 27. Vestibule in Building No.1 ell (1919), first floor, camera facing south.

Photograph 15 of 27. Southern and eastern elevations of Building No. 2 (1919), camera facing northwest.

Photograph 16 of 27. Interior roof structure of Building No.2 (1919), camera facing northeast.

Photograph 17 of 27. Southern and eastern elevations of Building No. 2 (1919), left, and southern elevation of loading dock and elevator shaft (ca.1960), camera facing northeast.

Photograph 18 of 27. Interior of Building No.2 (1919) with Bigelow boiler, camera facing northeast.

Photograph 19 of 27. Electrical Panels in Building No 2. (1919)

Photograph 20 of 27. Northern and western elevation of Building No. 3 (1922), camera facing southwest.

Photograph 21 of 27. Detail of northern elevation of Building No. 3 (1922), camera southeast.

Photograph 22 of 27. Southern and western elevations of Building No. 3 (1922), camera facing northwest.

Photograph 23 of 27. Eastern and southern elevations of Building No. 3 (1922), camera facing northeast.

Photograph 24 of 27. Interior automatic fire door in Building No. 2 (1922), second floor, camera facing south.

Photograph 25 of 27. Interior first floor of Building No. 3 (1922), camera facing north.

Photograph 26 of 27. Interior second floor hallway of Building No. 3 (1922), showing partitions (right), camera facing north.

Photograph 27 of 27. Interior second floor of Building No. 3 (1922), camera facing northeast.



North and eastern elevations of Building No. 1. (1919), camera facing southwest.
Photograph 1 of 27



North elevation (façade) of Building No. 1 (1919), camera facing southwest.
Photograph 2 of 27



Detail of portico on Building No. 1 (1919), camera facing southwest.
Photograph 3 of 27



Eastern elevation of Building No. 1 (1919), camera facing southwest.
Photograph 4 of 27



Southern Elevation of Building No. 1 (1919) (obscured by boiler house (1919), camera facing north.
Photograph 5 of 27



South and west elevations of addition (ca.1920-1960), camera facing northeast.
Photograph 6 of 27



Southern Elevation of Building No. 1 Ell (1919), camera facing north.
Photograph 7 of 27



Existing exterior of Building No. 1 (1919), camera facing southeast into addition (ca. 1920-1960).
Photograph 8 of 27



Interior first floor of Building No. 1 (1919), camera facing southwest.
Photograph 9 of 27



Interior second floor of Building No. 1 (1919), camera facing southwest.
Photograph 10 of 27



Interior second floor of Building No. 1 (1919), camera facing northeast.
Photograph 11 of 27



Interior automatic fire door in Building No. 1 (1919), second floor, camera facing north.
Photograph 12 of 27



Interior of Building No. 1 ell (1919), second floor, camera facing northeast.
Photograph 13 of 27



Vestibule in Building No.1 ell (1919), first floor, camera facing south.
Photograph 14 of 27



Southern and eastern elevations of Building No. 2 (1919), camera facing northwest.
Photograph 15 of 27



Interior roof structure of Building No.2 (1919), camera facing northeast.
Photograph 16 of 27



Southern and eastern elevations of Building No. 2 (1919), left, and southern elevation of loading dock and elevator shaft (ca.1960), camera facing northeast.
Photograph 17 of 27



Interior of Building No.2 (1919) with Bigelow boiler, camera facing northeast.
Photograph 18 of 27



Electrical Panels in Building No 2. (1919)

Photograph 19 of 27



Northern and western elevation of Building No. 3 (1922), camera facing southwest.
Photograph 20 of 27



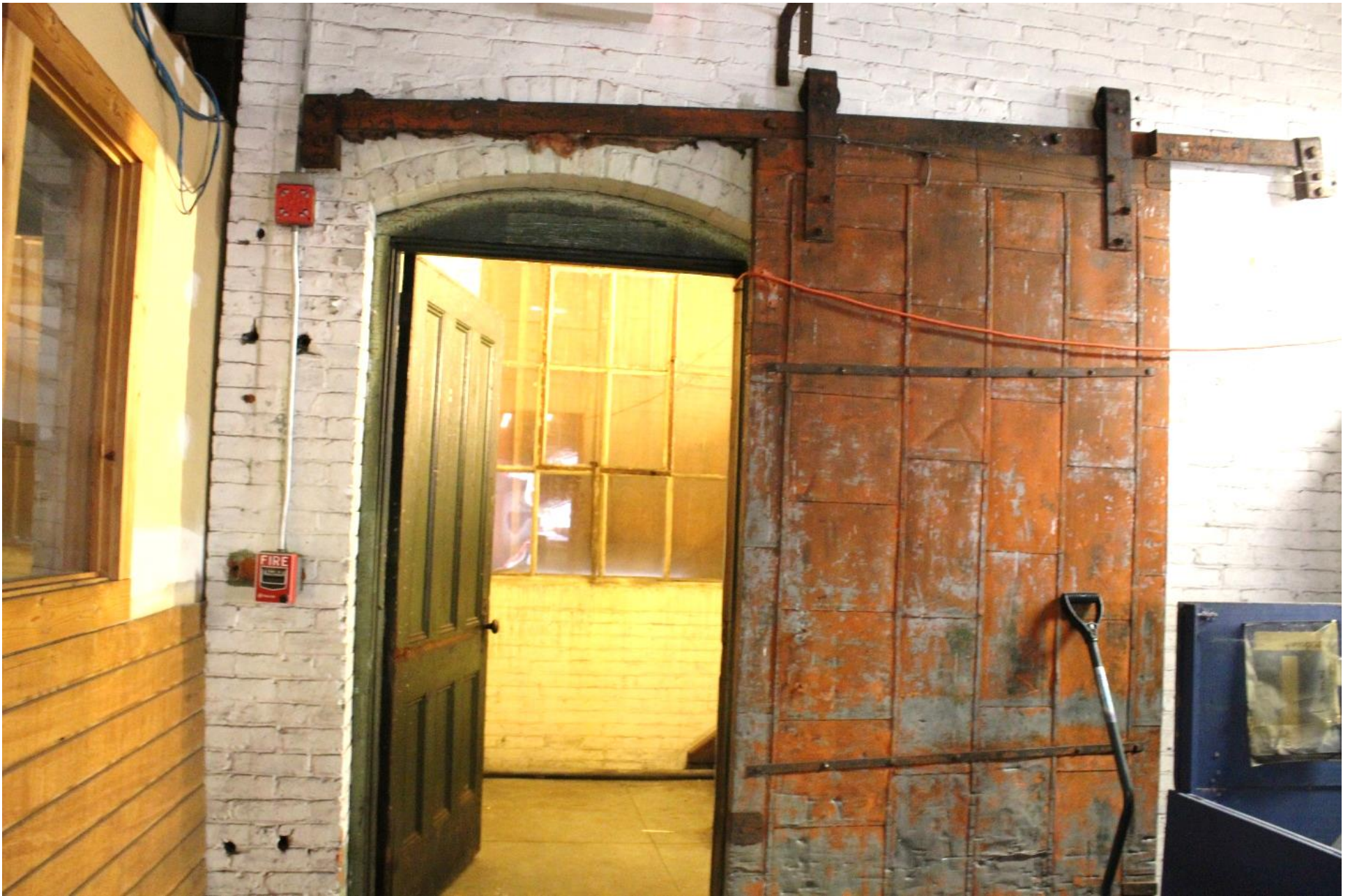
Detail of northern elevation of Building No. 3 (1922), camera southeast.
Photograph 21 of 27



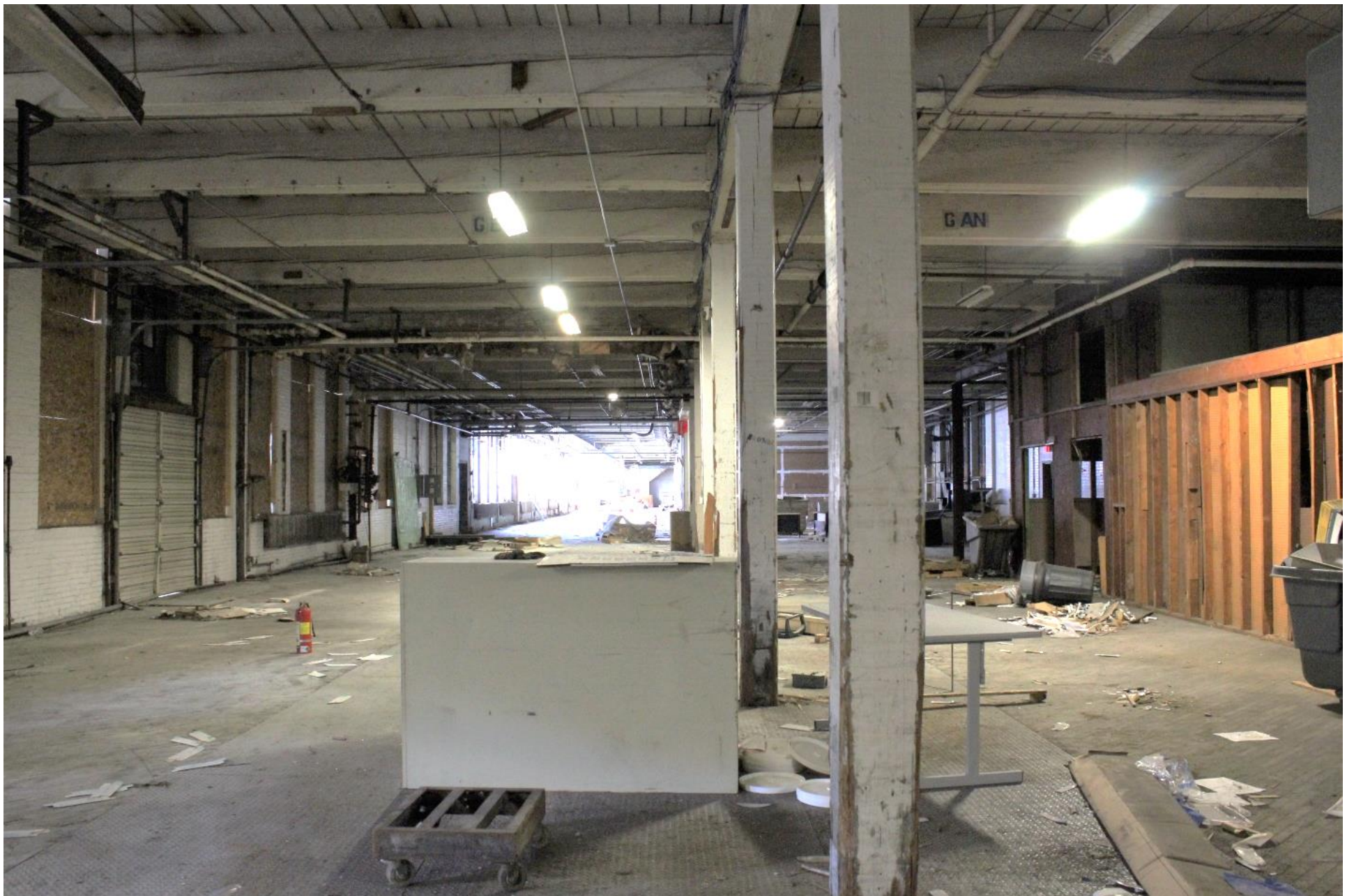
Southern and western elevations of Building No. 3 (1922), camera facing northwest.
Photograph 22 of 27



Eastern and southern elevations of Building No. 3 (1922), camera facing northeast.
Photograph 23 of 27



Interior automatic fire door in Building No. 2 (1922), second floor, camera facing south.
Photograph 24 of 27



Interior first floor of Building No. 3 (1922), camera facing north.
Photograph 25 of 27



Interior second floor hallway of Building No. 3 (1922), showing partitions (right), camera facing north.
Photograph 26 of 27



Interior second floor of Building No. 3 (1922), camera facing northeast.
Photograph 27 of 27