

PROVIDENCE HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

ARCHITECTURAL & HISTORICAL NARRATIVE 50 AGNES STREET, PROVIDENCE, RI

The subject structure located at 50 Agnes Street is comprised of one-, two-, and four-story blocks set on the east side of Agnes Street and extending east to Troy Street. The main block of the four-story building is long and rectangular; the first three stories are stone and the fourth is brick. The building is attached to 66 Dike Street, a long rectangular brick building set to the north at the corner of Dike and Troy Streets. 50 Agnes Street features segmental-arch widow openings with replacement sash. Brackets visible on the Agnes Street elevation support the projecting cornice. The building has received several additions over the years. A two-story, flat roof ell projects from the east elevation of the original block. The two-story block features the pedestrian entrances on its east elevation. The fenestration is comprised of replacement sash with concrete sills. An addition has been added to the two-story ell to provide access from the street level to the four-story opening on the original block. This access has a flat roof and sits on a concrete slab with vertical wood paneling. A tall brick chimneystack rises from the area adjacent to location of the boiler room.

John Waterman built the first three levels of the stone core of the mill as the Eagle Mill in 1835. The RIHP&HC data sheet for the property suggests that the original mill was largely destroyed. However, based on visual interior inspection and according to the city maps of 1895 and 1908, a large amount of the 1835 structure survives, making it one of the oldest mills in the city and state.

Harold Lawton of Warwick, Rhode Island purchased the property in 1898 for use by the Lawton Spinning Company. In 1903, the property was transferred to Frederick C. Fletcher of Brookline, Massachusetts, the president of the Pocasset Combing Company. The Pocasset Combing Company appears in the City Directories as far back as 1904 at this location. Early maps show the stone mill building at 50 Agnes Street with smaller wood-framed, one-story additions located on the present 66 Dike Street site. These wooden framed buildings are identified as storehouses on the Sanborn Insurance Map. The property was transferred to the Providence Combing Mills in 1921. By 1926, brick structures had been constructed on the site of the earlier wood-framed buildings at 66 Dike Street and 50 Agnes Street had been added onto at both the east and west ends. The Providence Combing Mills operated at this location until 1954. According to the City Directories, the next business to appear on site in 1960 was the Crown Pearl Company, manufacturers of beads. The Crown Pearl Company operated from 50 Agnes Street until 1970. After 1970, Mars Manufacturing Co., Inc., plastic bead manufacturers, and the Del Ray Pearl Company, jewelry manufacturers, operated from this location until the late 1980's.