

529 Main Street, Schraffts Building (circa 1925)

From Boston Landmark Commission's Charlestown Historic Resources Study 1981 (E. W. Gordon, Consultant)*:



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2015

The William F Schraffts and Sons Candy Factory (or, American Safety Razor Company Factory), is an Art Deco/Tapestry business office, food processing and packaging, and printing shop building. The building has an essentially rectangular plan with seven stories and a 10 story crenellated clock tower. Its walls are faced with brick with ceramic tile, limestone, and reinforced concrete. The lower floors are faced with limestone and floors three and four have limestone and brickwork banding. Brickwork piers provide vertical emphasis. Beneath

the windows are rectangular tile-faced panels, currently undergoing renovation.

Architect: Lockwood Greene and company

Original owner: William E Shrafft, George F Shrafft

The William F Schrafft and Sons Corporation building is a well-designed Art Deco industrial plant. Measuring 480 x 200', its massive 160-foot clock tower is the most visible landmark in the Charlestown Neck/Sullivan Square area. Ora L Stone called this building at the time of its completion in 1928 "a temple of industry and a real and lasting contribution to the development of the confectionery industry in America".

Designed by Lockwood Greene and Company Inc., engineers, this building has significant historical associations with W F Schrafft and Sons Corporation, a nationally known candy manufacturer. As early as 1861, William F Schrafft, a native of Germany, began the manufacture of pure gum Arabic drops, chocolate vanilla creams and hard candies. These candies were much in demand by soldiers during the Civil War. By 1895 this company was located at 11 Elm Street, Boston in a "four story brick building, each floor being 25 x 90' in dimensions, the upper stories being used for manufacturing purposes". At that time 600 pounds of candy was manufactured daily, employing a staff of 16. William E and George F Shrafft, the two sons of the founder, were taken into the firm as partners and the management of the business was given to them.

The expanding business required the purchase of a large parcel of land in Charlestown, adjacent to the Charlestown Bridge and Mystic River. On August 8, 1908, Edmund D Codman and Joseph B Russell sold a lot of land containing about 20, 986 ft.²

to William E Schrafft and George F Schrafft of Somerville. This deed (Suffolk 3557:520 5A) mentions "the new seven story and basement building now completed thereon".

The 1875 Atlas indicates that much of this site was under water. Owners of the land along the waterfront and close to Main Street on this site included Nathan and A W Tufts, Chester Guild and Son (including a tannery) and the S W Fuller Company. By 1885 the portion of this site closest to Main Street was occupied by six buildings, seven sheds, with a rail spur to the rear. The 1892 and 1901 atlases indicate that the lumber trade was conducted on this property.

The first Schrafft building completed on this site circa 1908 was a fraction of the size of the current complex and was constructed of brick and stone facing materials. The present building was built in 1925-1928. The factory contains over 16 acres of floor space and was the largest confectionery plant in the country engaged in producing fine quality candy. The plant is entirely self-contained. In addition to complete candy making equipment, it contains cold storage rooms, a box and printing shop, dining and recreation rooms, and the offices of the company. An adjoining power plant was equipped with two oil-fired steam turbine engine generators, and five refrigeration compressors, each driven by a direct-connected turbine. According to Peter Stott, much of the factory's original manufacturing equipment was still in use in 1980, resulting in competitive disadvantages in the industry.

In 1981, the factory was sold to the American Safety Razor Company, and a substantial modernization program began.

Bibliography:

Atlases-1875, 1885, 1892, 1901

Industries of Massachusetts, Ora L Stone
A Guide to the Industrial Archaeology of Eastern Massachusetts,
Peter Stott (Cambridge: MIT Press, forthcoming)
Suffolk deeds

*Digitized, and edited without change in content, from the scanned record in the Massachusetts Cultural Resource Information System, and with addition of current photographs. In the case of houses that have been altered since the survey, these photographs may not entirely correspond to the architectural description. If earlier photographs of suitable quality are available, these have been included.

R. Dinsmore