

HISTORIC RESOURCES INVENTORY - BUILDING AND STRUCTURES

Connecticut Commission on Culture & Tourism, One Constitution Plaza, 2nd Floor, Hartford, CT 06103

*** Note:** Please attach any additional or expanded information on a separate sheet.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Building Name (Common) Community Outreach Center, Bethel A. M. E. Church
 Building Name (Historic) Eastern Press
 Street Address or Location 654 Orchard Street
 Town/City New Haven Village Goffe-Dixwell County New Haven
 Owner(s) Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church, 255 Goffe Street Public Private

PROPERTY INFORMATION

Present Use: Non-profit Community Center / City of New Haven Senior Center
 Historic Use: Commercial / Industrial - Printing Company
 Accessibility to public: Exterior visible from public road? Yes No
 Interior accessible? Yes No If yes, explain During limited hours
 Style of building Modernist Date of Construction 1965, 1974

Material(s) (Indicate use or location when appropriate):

- | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clapboard | <input type="checkbox"/> Asbestos Siding | <input type="checkbox"/> Brick | <input type="checkbox"/> Wood Shingle | <input type="checkbox"/> Asphalt Siding |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fieldstone | <input type="checkbox"/> Board & Batten | <input type="checkbox"/> Stucco | <input type="checkbox"/> Cobblestone | <input type="checkbox"/> Aluminum Siding |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concrete (Type <u>Block Masonry</u>) | <input type="checkbox"/> Cut Stone (Type _____) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other <u>Insulated Metal Panels</u> | | |

Structural System

- Wood Frame Post & Beam Balloon Load bearing masonry Structural iron or steel
 Other Reinforced Concrete Beams (40' span)

Roof (Type)

- Gable Flat Mansard Monitor Sawtooth
 Gambrel Shed Hip Round Other _____

(Material)

- Wood Shingle Roll Asphalt Tin Slate Asphalt Shingle
 Built up Tile Other Rubber Membrane

Number of Stories: 1 and 2 Approximate Dimensions 110' x 150', 40'x50', 40'x40' (2 stories)

Structural Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Exterior Condition: Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated

Location Integrity: On original site Moved When? _____

Alterations? Yes No If yes, explain: 2-story addition 1974-75, entrance and ramp for senior center.

FOR OFFICE USE: Town # _____ Site # _____ UTM _____
 District: S NR If NR, Specify: Actual Potential

- Other notable features of building or site (*Interior and exterior*):

The complex consists of a tall 1-story block originally comprising office space, printing and bindery facilities. The original structure was enlarged by the addition of office and storage space along its south side, with a basement level. The exterior walls are painted concrete block masonry in a combination of patterned block scored with vertical grooves creating the appearance of smaller units, and full size blocks as quoins and a frieze at the roof line.

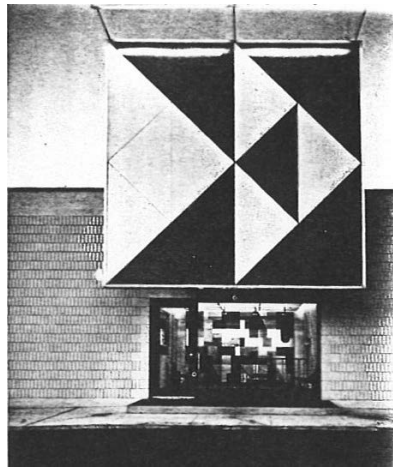
As originally designed, the public entrance under the large square red and white “super-graphic” logo sign, was differentiated from the employee and loading entrances further back from the street. The cube-shaped two-story office addition set on a diagonal, altered the composition of abstract block shapes, changed the entrance location, and moved the sign closer to the street. This addition is clad in vertical aluminum paneling alternating with vertical strips containing metal-framed windows and metal-clad spandrel panels in white or red.

Later renovations to convert the building to a community center, have again changed the circulation pattern by moving the entrance to the west side of the diagonal block. Seen in an aerial view, the assemblage of different building components can be seen; from the ground, the building is a unified composition.

- Historical or Architectural importance:

The building was an existing early 20th-century 1-story structure with a traditional storefront facing Orchard Street. The Redevelopment Agency's plan for the area had a goal of removing non-conforming uses in what was to be solely a residential area; this business was allowed to remain as an exception to the policy because it was a strong local business and employer. The existing structure was wrapped by a new Modernist concrete masonry shell using a scored block pattern that epitomized the Modernist ideal of uniting functionality and decoration. Much as in the Hamilton-East Street industrial area, this material was a popular and economical alternative to traditional brick during the 1960s. Adjacent houses to the south were removed, making way for parking and loading access and allowing the building to be seen clearly from the intersection of Orchard and Goffe Streets.

The scale of the one-story block along Orchard Street matches the height of the nearby 2-story residential buildings to the north. Although the windowless west facade now seems unfriendly to pedestrians, its massing set off the super-graphic of the sign-canopy on the south side and conformed to the contemporary Modernist preference for expressing building volumes as a series of abstract building blocks. The sign graphic by graphic designer/artist Norman Ives doubled as a canopy over what was originally the public entrance, and was a vivid logo for the company for some years, appearing also on their trucks. Traces of the pattern can still be seen through the over-painted signage. The cubic office wing placed diagonally was added nearly 10 years after the 1965 remodeling, and continued the expression of building elements as abstract volumes.



1. View of sign and entrance in 1969 (Architectural Record, p. 163).



2. Southeast view from Orchard Street, camera facing northwest.



3. East view - neighborhood context showing adjacent houses along Orchard Street, camera facing north.



4. Site Plan – detail from City of New Haven Tax Map 293/ 324/ 041, not to scale, North ↑ .



5. Aerial view from Google Maps <http://maps.google.com/> accessed 2/28/2010.