

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 How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Clovis Robert Block

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 338-348 Main Street not for publication

city or town Holyoke vicinity

state Massachusetts code MA county Hampden code 013 zip code 01040

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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
☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Brona Simon

10/23/02

Signature of certifying official/Title Brona Simon, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Massachusetts Historical Commission

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional Comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined eligible for the
National Register
☐ See continuation sheet.
☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register
☐ removed from the
National Register
☐ other (explain): _____

10/24
Signature of the Keeper

Edson R. Beall

Date of Action

12/5/02

CLOVIS ROBERT BLOCK

Name of Property

HAMPDEN, MASS.

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

(Check only one box)

☒ private

☐ public-local

☐ public-State

☐ public-Federal

☒ building(s)

☐ district

☐ site

☐ structure

☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

building

sites

structures

0

objects

1

0

Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**

NONE

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE: stores

DOMESTIC: multiple dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls BRICK

SHEET METAL

roof ASPHALT

other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See attached continuation sheets.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

DESCRIPTION

The Clovis Robert Block is a single-building nomination of a four-story mixed use commercial block at the corner of Main and Cabot Streets in the South Holyoke neighborhood. It was designed by noted Holyoke architect George P.B. Alderman in 1881, and expanded under Alderman's direction in 1888.

The Robert block is four stories tall, faced in common red brick with yellow cast stone trim finished to imitate tooled sandstone. The Main Street elevation is highly detailed with a broad copper bay set between two masonry flanks and topped by a classical-style pressed metal cornice. (photo #1) The simpler elevation on Cabot Street maintains the brick wall and cast stone details, topped by a continuation of the pressed metal cornice. (photo #2) Originally the building contained two street-level storefronts at 74 and 78 Cabot Street, and three storefronts on Main Street (listed as 338, 342, and 346 Main Street). The three upper floors contained apartments for fifteen families, accessed from the street by three separate stairhall entries at 76 Cabot Street and 340 and 348 Main Street.

The footprint of the Robert Block follows the lot line of the corner parcel on three sides with no setback from the public sidewalk on Main and Cabot Streets. The exposed side wall of the building was formerly a party wall with an adjacent four-story building (ca. 1888) that subsequently burned and was demolished. (photo #1) The rear of the lot is partially open to the alley in order to provide delivery access to the commercial spaces and tenant access to the two ranks of common rear porches. (photo #2)

At street level, the two primary elevations are defined by five modern commercial storefronts and three entries to the common apartment stairways. On Cabot Street, both the storefronts have been entirely reconfigured with modern brick infill extending from grade to transom, modern windows, recessed modern entries, and modern aluminum signbands. On Main Street, the three storefronts are sheltered by the projection of a shingled pent roof overhang that supports modern back-lit signs. The corner storefront at 332 Main Street has been infilled with modern brick, an aluminum storefront door, and aluminum-framed display windows. The middle storefront at 342 Main remains a recessed entry with a wood-paneled surround, but a modern brick kneewall hides the lower third of the cast iron columns and the display windows have been replaced with modern units. The third storefront at 346 Main features a recessed entry with a modern commercial aluminum door. The cast iron columns that frame the windows are still exposed along with remnants of a pressed metal facing that protected the paneled wood bulkhead below the windows. The tops of all the columns and the remains of the transom area are hidden behind the pent roof overhang.

The street level entries to the three apartment stairways each consist of a single leaf door under a small transom. At 76 Cabot Street, the entry is defined by a brick arch with rusticated cast stone

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

springers and keystone. The door is a modern flush-panel door and the transom area has been blocked with plywood. At 340 Main Street, the top of the entry is concealed under the pent roof canopy. The door is a delaminated single light door with a solid panel in the transom area. At 348 Main Street, the entry is recessed with a paneled wood surround flanked on one side by a cast iron pilaster with a vine motif. The modern single light door is set under a solid paneled transom.

Above the first floor, the building is divided architecturally into rhythmic masonry bays. There are seven bays along Cabot Street with a fenestration pattern (from the alley to Main Street) of 3-2-1-2-1-2-1, and three bays along Main Street with a fenestration pattern of 4-4-4. The shallowly-projecting middle bay on Main Street is sheathed in dull copper with eclectic details in the Queen Anne style. Both street elevations are united under a continuous brick entablature with a projecting metal cornice supported by stamped metal brackets.

The primary elevation on Main Street incorporates the original 1881 section as one-third of the façade and the expansion of 1888 as the remaining two-thirds. The well-planned symmetry maintains a strong visual congruity across both periods of construction with only subtle differences between the components.

Above Main Street, the most prominent architectural feature is the wide, three-story, projecting center bay in dulled copper with four windows at each upper floor. The sheet metal spandrels in the central bay are stamped in a fish-scale pattern as are the transom areas between the third and fourth floor. The copper bay terminates in an elaborate gabled molded metal cornice with dentils and modillions above a decorative metal frieze. The triangular pediment, executed in sheet metal features a prominent name block: "Clovis Robert / 1888." Projecting brick piers flank the copper bay from second story to cornice.

The exterior masonry walls extend the depth of the Cabot Street side, wrap around the first third of the Main Street elevation, and then pick up the 1888 section beyond the center bay. The walls are common red brick, overpainted at the first floor and heavily stained with soot above. Window openings are defined by a single continuous course of header brick running just below the cast stone window sills at each level. The tops of the windows are framed by segmental arches of glazed red brick with keystones of vermiculated yellow cast stone (imitating sandstone). Yellow cast stone strong bands connect the base of each segmented arch, adding definition to each floor.

The second floor windows on Main Street provide the only variation in the 1881 design. Instead of the usual pattern of four window openings, the first bay of the second floor is fitted with two three-part (Chicago-style) windows. The header course, cast stone sill, and cast stone band match the standard detail, but the two window openings are defined by segmented jack arches in glazed red brick with cast stone springers and keystones. (Anecdotal evidence suggests that this unit on the second floor was used as an office for the commercial space below.)

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

Above the fourth floor windows runs a decorative brick frieze consisting of horizontal and vertical brick bands in soldier courses and toothed courses. Scrolled metal brackets under the eaves support a deep overhang with a formed sheet metal cornice. Above the flat roofline are three brick chimneys on the Cabot Street side and two flanking the metal gable on the Main Street side.

The rear elevation is a complex jumble of elements in multiple planes. The plain brick end wall perpendicular to Cabot Street has a double leafed entry under an arched brick transom, a single pair of windows on each floor above, and a simple metal drip edge at the roofline. The U-shaped rear section parallel to Cabot Street is hung with modern wooden porches connecting across the air space. The section parallel to Main Street is built out at grade level with an infill section of cinder block and modern brick that supports a wooden staircase to the porches above. The exterior walls along the porches are wood sheathing instead of masonry. There is some evidence that the wood was formerly protected by pressed metal cladding, but it is now covered by sheets of modern paneling. The narrow projecting end wall of the rear elevation is scarred by evidence of an earlier adjoining building and features a single window set adjacent to the flue on the third and fourth floors.

The exposed side wall of the Robert block perpendicular to Main Street is a former party wall shared with an adjacent four-story building (since demolished): (photo #1) The masonry is marked with pockets to received floor framing, thimble openings that connected stovepipes to the flue, and a whitewashed area that was probably an air shaft between the buildings. There are no windows or door openings and no evidence of a former direct connection between the Robert block and the adjacent structure. The flat roofline is capped with a simple metal drip edge.

Interior Description

The interior of the Robert Block has been largely destroyed over the years as the commercial spaces were remodeled and the apartment configuration was altered. The building has been vacant for a number of years and allowed to deteriorate. Ceilings, walls, and woodwork have been heavily damaged by roof failure, water and ice, and colonies of vermin. The apartments have been trashed by squatters and walls have been demolished by vandals seeking to salvage plumbing and heating materials.

The first floor commercial areas have been fully modernized with sheetrock partitions, masonite paneling, modern display windows, drop ceilings, wall-to-wall carpeting, and vinyl floor covering. Some of the interior walls have been removed to combine adjacent spaces. Other walls have been inserted to create offices and service areas.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

The three interior staircases that serve the apartments above are mostly intact, but heavily vandalized and covered with multiple coats of lead paint. The stair at 76 Cabot Street (dating from 1881) is very simple and represents a typical back stair of a secondary side of the building with little architectural detail. The original main stair at 340 Main (also, 1881) is more elaborate with a broad stairhall, direct windows, paneled wainscoting, turned balusters, molded handrail, and newel posts. There is a small change in floor level connecting the stairhall to the 1888 expansion. The third staircase at 348 Main is a simpler design, but also features turned balusters and newel posts, a molded handrail, and paneled wainscoting. Portions of the third stair are scorched and crackled from the heat of a fire in the adjacent building.

Within the units, the quality and condition of finishes varies dramatically and all the interior surfaces show high concentrations of lead paint. On the Cabot Street side of the building, many of the interior walls have been completely stripped of plaster and lath and many of the ceilings have been pulled down. Virtually all of the window and door casings were pulled off during a previous remodeling and replaced with pine flat stock. On the Main Street side, some of the plaster walls remain, along with molded wood baseboards and stock windows and door surrounds from the late 19th century.

There are a few remaining examples of singled-glazed wood window sash in 1/1, 2/2, and 6/6 configurations, but not enough to discern the original design intent. Since many of the windows are not properly sized for the frame, it is also possible that they were salvaged from other tenement properties. Apartment entries and interior doors have been destroyed throughout the building, but there are a few painted four-panel doors in the 1881 section and some five-panel doors in the 1888 section. The kitchens and baths are demolished throughout. Unit floors, where visible under piles of debris and later coverings, are either pine boards or modern plywood.

Documented Alterations

Holyoke Building Department permits from 1921 to the present record very few changes to the block since its completion in 1888, although there may have been some changes without permits. Under the first recorded permit (August 19, 1940), filed by the Estate of Emile Wilson, swinging doors were installed in the first floor vestibule at 76 Cabot Street, the principal entrance to the apartments. Under a subsequent permit in January 1969, owners Lionel and S. Nadeau, Sr. spent \$75,000 to upgrade the dwelling units. The architect for that work was listed as Kennco Associates. An additional \$8,000 was spent for interior apartment alterations in 1971. An interior office was remodeled with sheetrock and paneling in 1978 at a cost of \$1,500 and \$50 was spent the same year to "replace windows with wall."

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

On the exterior, all of the storefronts were partially infilled with brick and new display windows, probably around 1969-71 when the apartments were last remodeled. On the Main Street elevation, the transom area (including the signband and cornice) was covered with a pent roof and shingled overhang.

The apartment interiors show evidence of this remodeling, with sheetrock overlays and partitions, relocated passage doors, modified access patterns, and some updated heating systems. The pressed metal ceilings in the upstairs apartments were most likely removed at the same time. (They are noted on the 1951 Sanborn Insurance map, updated to 1941.)

The adjacent four story building at 350-352 Main Street (probably constructed at the same time as the expansion to the Robert block in 1888) was demolished after a fire, exposing a structural brick party wall devoid of windows on the side of the Robert block. Brick repairs were made to the upper wall and parapet on the side of the Robert block to stabilize the area after the adjacent building was demolished (ca. 1980).

Current Condition

The Clovis Robert Block has been vacant for many years and is in very poor condition. The general form and character of the building is intact, but many of the details are obscured or damaged. The cast stone of the 1888 section is a particular problem. The material is crumbling and spalling throughout, while the cast stone in the 1881 section seems to have weathered much better.

On Main and Cabot Streets, the street-level storefronts have been built out and heavily remodeled several times. A few of the earlier cast iron storefront details are visible along Main Street, but their condition cannot be evaluated until the later material is removed.

The basic layout of the apartments and the three stairways remain intact, but the apartments are in a state of partial demolition due to deferred maintenance, long-term moisture penetration, lack of heat, multiple pigeon colonies, and rampant vandalism. Most of the window sash are missing or broken and virtually all of the interior finishes are heavily damaged. The kitchens and baths were destroyed by vandals salvaging metal plumbing pipes and fixtures. Most of the apartment walls have been literally demolished by squatters and vandals, and all of the units have been "trashed." The two upper floors have also been heavily damaged by water pouring in from the roof and then freezing.

While the condition of the Robert Block is not good, a local community development organization is proposing to rehabilitate the building in order to improve housing quality, reduce crime, and stem the decline of the neighborhood.

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Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

Archaeological Description

While no ancient Native American sites are recorded on the Clovis Robert Block property, sites may be present. Six sites are located in the general area (within one mile), most along the current shoreline of the Connecticut River and its floodplain. Current and paleoenvironmental attributes of the block do not uniformly represent favorable locational characteristics (slope, soil drainage, distance to wetlands) for ancient Native American sites. The Clovis Robert Block is located on a level to moderately sloping riverine terrace. Natural soil types and characteristics in the area have been obscured or destroyed by urban development. Wetland resources, represented by the First and Second Level Canals are located within 1000 feet of the property, however, both waterways are man-made. Issues of integrity are also present that prohibit the survival of any cultural resources on the property. Construction of the building, which has a basement and covers nearly the entire block, would have destroyed any resources that were present. Given the above information, a low potential exists for recovering both ancient Native American and historic resources on the nominated property.

(end)

CLOVIS ROBERT BLOCK

Name of Property

HAMPDEN, MASS.

County and State

8. 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.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☒ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested **HPCA # 7850**
- ☐ 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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE**ARCHITECTURE****Period of Significance****1881-1952****Significant Dates****1881, 1888****Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A**Cultural Affiliation****N/A****Architect/Builder****ALDERMAN, GEORGE P. B.****Primary location of additional data:**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Clovis Robert Block is a four-story, mixed-use, commercial building erected in 1881 at a prominent corner location in downtown Holyoke, Massachusetts, and expanded under the same owner and architect in 1888. Despite abandonment, vandalism, and commercial remodeling, the Robert Block retains the essential integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. It meets Criterion A at the local level for its association with the French-Canadian immigrant population of Ward 2 (South Holyoke), and for its visual and social significance associated with a period of repaid industrial development in Holyoke. The Robert Block also meets Criterion C at the local level as a prime example of the early work of noted Holyoke architect George P.B. Alderman.

Criterion A

Holyoke is a planned industrial community developed by the Hadley Falls Company in the late 1840s along a system of three power canals fed by the adjacent falls of the Connecticut River. It was incorporated as a town in March 1850 with a population of approximately 3,700. As a result of rapid industrial growth and the migration of workers to its textile and paper mills, Holyoke received a city charter in 1873, with a population of approximately 13,000.

The neighborhood of South Holyoke (Ward 2) is bounded by Appleton Street, South Street, the Second Level Canal, and the Connecticut River. Main Street was the earliest thoroughfare in the industrial community, although most of the downtown commercial development eventually took place along High Street, which runs parallel above the first level canal. Development of Main Street between Sargeant and Cabot began in the late 1870s and a fire station was constructed on Main Street near Sargeant in 1874 to protect nearby mills and wooden tenements. Most of the commercial district was built up during the late industrial period of 1880-1910, when there was a major effort to improve tenement housing and reduce fire risks. In the 1910s, many of the Main Street parcels in the middle of each block were still owned by the Holyoke Water Power Company and remained vacant.

The Robert Block is significant for its historic association with the French-Canadian population of Ward 2 in South Holyoke, and for its contribution to the early development of the neighborhood. French-Canadian migration to Holyoke began in the late 1850s in response to the need for textile workers at the Lyman Mills. This represented the third wave of workers employed in the planned industrial community, following the initial influx of Yankees, and the larger influx of Irish immigrants.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

French-Canadian immigrants first settled in Ward 4, along High Street to the Connecticut River. By the late 1860s, they were moving into Ward 2 (South Holyoke), between the first and second-level canals. Precious Blood Roman Catholic Church, built in 1869, was Holyoke's first French-speaking parish. It stood at Cabot and East Streets, one block away from Main, but was closed and demolished in the 1990s.

French-Canadian immigration slowed as a result of the Panic of 1873, but picked up again in the Spring of 1879 with a sudden return to economic prosperity. According to Peter Haebler's dissertation on the French-Canadians in Holyoke, the peak years of new French-Canadian immigration to Holyoke, which closely followed the New England economic cycle were 1880-83, 1886-93, and 1895-1900. After 1900 the movement of French-Canadians to New England fell off sharply.

Predominantly employed as textile workers, French-Canadians comprised a quarter of Holyoke's total population by 1885, and held 70% of the jobs in the textile mills. The Robert Block was constructed during these years of heavy French-Canadian migration into Holyoke, and the first portion of the Robert Block may have been partially a response to the peak years of 1880-83. The second portion of the building, which completed its current appearance in 1888, may reflect the peak years of 1886-93; the ending date of which corresponds with the Panic of 1893, another economic downturn.

In addition to the three storefronts along Main Street and two on Cabot, the expanded Robert Block housed fifteen families on the upper three floors. Housing for mill workers was chronically tight in Holyoke during the last two decades of the 19th century, and the Robert Block offered a safer and healthier alternative to the older and more crowded wooden tenements.

The Robert Block on Main Street is particularly associated with the life of Clovis Robert, a pioneering French-Canadian who came to Holyoke among the first wave of Quebecois immigrants in 1872. Born in Chamblay, Quebec, in 1838, he became "one of the best known of the French pioneer settlers in the city [of Holyoke]." In an 1899 newspaper article on "Holyoke's Rich Men," Robert was listed as the richest man in Ward 2, worth over \$75,000.

Robert's working career began in New Haven, Connecticut, where he moved in 1854 to learn the trade of blacksmithing. He moved to California for seven years, returned to Canada to marry in 1863, and then moved to Holyoke in 1872. For many years he was the foreman of the blacksmith shop of the Merrick Thread Company, four blocks south of where he built the Robert Block.

As soon as he arrived in town, Robert embarked on a series of real estate ventures, in some cases purchasing building lots for development. He is said to have urged his fellow French-Canadians to save up their money and do the same. Robert's own experience demonstrated that real estate ownership was an opportunity for French-Canadian immigrants to achieve success in the broader community.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

Robert never sought political office, but was an active Republican and served two terms as one of the city real estate agents for the Holyoke & Westfield Railroad, whose tracks ran along the west bank of the Connecticut River through South Holyoke. According to his obituary, Robert belonged to the Mt. Tom Lodge of Masons, and was an early member of the First Congregational Church in Holyoke. His other real estate holdings have not yet been documented. According to Clovis Robert's 1909 obituary, the Robert Block, was "perhaps the best known of the many buildings that he built of bought." Two years before his death, Robert sold the Robert Block to his son-in-law Dr. Felix J. Cloutiere, who owned it until some time after 1911.

Criterion C

The Robert Block was designed for local entrepreneur Clovis Robert in 1881 by Holyoke architect George P.B. Alderman and expanded under the same owner and architect in 1888. Alderman was Holyoke's best-known architect at the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century. Born in Granby, CT, he moved with his parents to Holyoke in 1879 and worked with his father to learn the carpenter's trade. Not content with being a carpenter, he entered the office of Holyoke architect James A. Clough.

After five years with Clough, Alderman moved to Chicago to take a job with architect Cass Chapman, but returned to Holyoke in 1885 to open his own firm. When he was later joined by his brother, Henry Holcomb Alderman, the firm was renamed George P.B. Alderman and Company.

During his long career, Alderman designed hundreds of buildings, mostly in Holyoke, but also in New Bedford and Fall River, MA, and New Britain, CT. His commissions included numerous churches, rectories, schools, hotels, theatres, fraternal halls, commercial buildings and apartments, mills, and numerous private residences, many of them in the City of Holyoke. He is said to have designed literally hundreds of tenements and apartment blocks in Holyoke and vicinity.

The Robert Block is one of Alderman's earliest designs for a commercial apartment block and one of the few remaining Alderman buildings on Main Street. The building was begun in 1881 at the corner of Main and Cabot streets, and subsequently extended to its current form in 1888 by expanding the building along Main Street. Water Department records indicate that the water was turned on for the building on May 18, 1881. However, Robert's obituary of November 29, 1909 in the *Holyoke Daily Transcript* notes that "In 1882 he built the first part of the block at the corner of Main and Cabot streets and he finished up the work in 1888."

While the original design of the Robert Block as built in 1881 is fairly simple, the expanded block as completed in 1888 closely echoes Alderman's original design for the Tilley Block at 273-279 Main Street in Holyoke (MHC #194, erected in 1887, but remodeled in 1913). Both buildings

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

were four stories tall with the primary elevation divided into three bays. The central bay on both buildings was a bowed four-part window with sheet metal fish-scales shingle patterns in the transom areas between the stories. Both bays were also crowned with a gabled pediment that enclosed a name and date block.

The similarity of the two buildings is probably not accidental. If Clovis Robert admired the recently constructed Tilley Block on nearby High Street, he also made life easier for the architect. Alderman was able to develop a coherent design with the 1888 addition with the central bay masking the joining of the older and new portions of the building. The 1881 portion ends where the central copper sheet metal central bay begins. This middle section of the building and the adjacent masonry bay were added in 1888 and resulted in the building's current symmetrical façade. While the Robert Block retains its coherent 1888 appearance, the companion Tilley Block was redesigned in 1913 with a completely new brick and tile Beaux Arts façade. It was renamed the Childs Block when Thomas Childs moved his shoe store from 210 High Street.

Alderman's pride in the Tilley Block design is reflected in his 1894 presentation booklet "Architecture Through a Camera" in which he devoted a full page to describing the Tilley Block, (based on an April 6, 1888 article in the Holyoke Transcript): "Rising four stories high, the center is one immense bay window, sheathed in dull copper, an innovation in building much affected and admirably by C.C. Kelly [a local sheet metal firm]." It is clear that the Robert Block's current appearance is a successful expansion of the original 1881 design and that the sheet-metal center bay was directly inspired by the 1887 Tilley Block.

The Robert Block represents Alderman's early career and is one of several buildings designed between 1885-1893 in the Italianate, Romanesque, and Queen Anne styles. Alderman's mature designs of the late 1890s-1910 were inspired by the Beaux Arts and Renaissance Revival movements, but he gradually embraced simpler and toned-down classical motifs after 1910. Several inventoried commercial blocks in Holyoke represent the progress of Alderman's career and his exploration of the various revival styles:

- HLY-88 181-183 High St., Taber Building – 1870 /Italianate style (renovations)
- HLY-95 281 High St., ca. 1870-85 / Romanesque style with slate mansard roof
- HLY-97 341-343 High St., Rigali Bldg. – 1887 / Romanesque & Queen Anne
- **HLY-324 338-348 Main St., Richard Block – 1881, 1888 /Queen Anne,**
Classical
- HLY-100 324-326 High St., Guyotte Block – 1892 / Romanesque style
- HLY-522 907 Hampden St., Highland Block – 1893 / Victorian Gothic style
- HLY-717 3-7 Franklin St., St. John Block – ca. 1896 / Queen Anne style

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

Only two inventoried buildings in Holyoke represent Alderman's ornate neo-classical designs:

- HLY-94 259 High St., Steiger Block – 1899 / Beaux Arts style
- HLY-335 449-461 High St., Friedrich Block – 1908 / Renaissance Revival and Neoclassical [NR pending]

Three of Alderman's other classically-inspired commercial buildings in Holyoke have not survived:

- LeClair & Choiniere Block (razed) at the corner of Cabot and Essex Streets.
- L.A. LaFrance Block (razed) on Appleton Street
- Brueck Block (razed) at the corner of Main and Cabot Streets.

Alderman's commissions after 1910 show a more restrained use of classical ornament. The Richmond (MHC# 272), 462-464 Maple Street, is the only apartment block attributed to Alderman after 1910. Another commercial block at 273-279 High Street (MHC# 194, constructed 1913) exhibits a simplified classical design in blond brick with terra cotta trim. While the terra cotta cornice and trim is richly surfaced, the façade of this block is quite plain and flat. Also finished in blond brick with terra cotta trim is the commercial block at 316 High Street (MHC# 337, constructed 1917), a similar simplified classical design with a decorative terra cotta cornice. The commercial block at 316 High Street and the industrial building at 92 Race Street (MHC# 277, constructed 1923), are examples of Alderman's move to the early 20th Century Commercial Style, with flat wall surfaces, contrasting flat panels, chevrons, and other geometric designs setting off bays, floors, or openings within flat wall surfaces.

Context Evaluation for area surrounding the Clovis Robert Block

Within the context of South Holyoke, the Clovis Robert Block is one of the few remaining commercial blocks on Main Street dating from the economic boom of 1880-1910. During that period, the Main Street corridor of Ward 2 became an important commercial and entertainment area serving a thriving neighborhood of Irish, French-Canadian, German, and Polish residents.

The commercial development of Main Street followed Holyoke's great industrial expansion of 1870 and 1885, when the increased demand for mill sites and waterpower resulted in expansion of the canal system. In 1877 there was little commercial development on Main and most of the cross streets and intersections were occupied by a thin scattering of wooden business blocks and wood-frame tenements. The one extant building on Main Street from that early period is the Holyoke Fire Station #2 (MHC# 55, constructed 1874) at 452 Main Street. The fire station (now vacant) was built to address the high risk of fire resulting from the number of wooden buildings in South Holyoke.

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

Because Holyoke was a planned industrial community, the Holyoke Water Power Company held most of the vacant land and could release it for development as needed. The middle of each of the four blocks on the lower side of Main Street remained vacant into the 1910s. The last major building constructed on Main Street in South Holyoke is Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox church (MHC# 56, constructed 1916-17) at 410 Main Street. It is a Byzantine Revival structure designed by New York architect, Kryiakas Kalfas and situated on land formerly held by the Holyoke Water Power Company.

The upper side of Main Street was developed with a row of business blocks, mostly 3-4 stories tall. The largest and most imposing blocks built during the 1870-1910 period included the Clovis Robert Block at 338-348 Main Street (built 1881, 1888), presented in this nomination, and the Friedrich Block (1908) at 449-461 Main Street (corner Sargeant). Three other large blocks have been torn down: the five-story Charles Brueck Block at 330-334 Main Street (now a gas station), the four-story Curran Block at Main and Sargeant (now undeveloped), and the Vincent Block (1870-77) at the corner of Main and Cabot (also undeveloped). The two-block area of Main between Sargeant and Cabot, formerly held two other Alderman-designed blocks: the five-story Cloutier Block (1897) at 351 Main Street (now undeveloped), and the adjacent Marcotte Block at 349 Main Street (reduced from five to three stories in 1985).

In 1991 the Holyoke Office of Community Development developed an area inventory form for "The Flats/South Holyoke" which suggested that commercial buildings in the 200-300 blocks of Main Street near Cabot might be included in an expanded National Register historic district. However the recommendation was later withdrawn since so many of the buildings in this area have subsequently been abandoned, demolished, or damaged by fire (Ann Sinclair, Personal Communication, 2001).

COMMERCIAL TENANT HISTORY

The early commercial use of the Robert Block is not well documented. There are no reverse Holyoke city directories with a numerical listing by street and building address until 1915. A survey of the business listings in Holyoke directories from 1881-1915 did not immediately identify commercial tenants at this location.

The earliest (1884) Sanborn insurance map indicates that the building was owned by "C. Robert," but does not specify the commercial tenants. The revised Sanborn map of April 1889 indicates that the Robert Block housed a furniture store (Sainte Marie and Charest), a boot and shoe store (Antoine Marcotte and Co.), and a small millinery establishment. These French-Canadian owned tenant businesses are not surprising, since the building was owned by a compatriot, Clovis Robert, and the area around Main Street and Cabot Street was heavily French Canadian. The first French Catholic church in Holyoke, the Church of the Precious Blood, was located only a block south of the Robert Block at Cabot and Park Street.

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

By 1895 the Robert Block still housed a boot and shoe store, with 346 Main Street and 78 Cabot given as the address. The firm was M. King and Company, and it appears that this business occupied all the commercial space on the ground floor.

The tenants in the building are easier to track once reverse city directories are available. Between 1916 and 1940, city directories indicate that the major commercial tenant in the Block was J. Philias Rodier, who operated a men's furnishings store at 338 Main. A similarly long-lived commercial tenant was Harry M. Green, who operated a restaurant at 344 Main. By 1940, Green's restaurant had been bought or taken over and was listed as D. Peterson's restaurant.

The most stable commercial tenant was the E.D. Wells and Company hardware store. First listed in 1916, this company remained in the Robert Block for over 50 years. Between 1960 and 1965 its name was changed to the Wells Furniture Company, and by 1970 was no longer a commercial tenant.

A small professional office, that of Delor I. Beaupre, an M.D., was located at 340 Main Street. In the 1920 city directory, Dr. Beaupre listed 340 as both his home and office, which was one the second floor of the Robert Block. In the 1930 directory, Beaupre's space was listed as the office of R.A. Manseau, a French-Canadian dentist. Dr. Beaupre was still practicing in the neighborhood in 1950 with an office at 339 Main Street, half a block east.

By 1981 the decline of Holyoke's industries resulted in a surplus of commercial space in its downtown and an increase in community action programs. Commercial tenants in the Robert Block for that year were Economy Insurance Agency of Holyoke, Inc. at 338 Main, South Holyoke Development Corporation at 344 Main, and Community and Regional Opportunity Program, Inc. at 346 Main.

RESIDENTIAL TENANT HISTORY

The residential tenants in the Robert Block were predominantly French-Canadian from the early 1900s through the early 1940s, and approximately half the residential tenants had French surnames even in the 1950 city directory. In addition, most of the tenants in the Robert Block worked in the immediate neighborhood at businesses and industries in the Main Street area of South Holyoke. For example, in 1916 one renter was Eustache Belanger, a rubberworker, a block and a half away at 189 Park Street. Belanger was still a tenant at Robert in 1920, but had departed by 1930. Japhet Pelland, another tenant, worked for the William Skinner and Sons silk mill. He was listed in the 1916, 1920, and 1930 city directories as living at a Robert Block apartment.

The trend of living at the Robert Block and working locally for Holyoke businesses in the area continued despite the fact that automobile became more common, and World War II could have

(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

been predicted to have caused changes. Many tenants could walk to work. In 1940, two tenants were Arthur Sicard, a sealer for the Chemical Paper Manufacturing Co., and Albert Roberge, a puncher at the American Thread Company, located only four blocks farther along Main Street. In 1950 Rene Charest was a machinery operator at the Hadley Mills, Inc., Raymond J. Downing, a brakeman for the Boston & Maine Railroad, Richard Nimchick, a shipper at National Bland Book, and Lawson C. Wilson, a machine operator for Pal Blade Company. The latter three were still living at the Robert Block in 1955 and Sicard did not move for another decade.

The first two Hispanics to rent apartments in the Robert Block are listed in 1965, as Felix R. Rivera and Juan Rivera. Both men worked as machine operators at Sonoco Products. By 1970, Luis Urbina, a cutter at Brown Company, and Jose Cardoza and Jose Rodriguis rented apartments at the Robert Block, the last two with no occupation listed in the city directory. By 1981, the last year for which there is a reverse city directory, nine out of 13 renters in the Robert Block had Hispanic surnames.

BUILDING OWNERSHIP

In 1907, Clovis Robert transferred the Robert Block to his son-in-law, Dr. Felix J. Cloutier. Robert died in 1909, and Cloutier still owned the building in 1911. No permits were taken out for the Robert Block until 1940, by which time the building was part of the Emile Wilson estate. The next permit was taken out by owners Lionel Nadeau, Sr. and S. Nadeau in 1969. In 1971, the owner was Oreal Rainault. By 1979 the owner was John Guiel, whose address was listed as 70 Market Street in Northampton. The predominance of French-Canadian surnames indicates how remarkably stable the South Holyoke area was up through the early 1970s.

REHABILITATION PLANS

After many years of vacancy, vandalism and neglect, the Clovis Robert Block is scheduled for tax-advantaged rehabilitation to its original mixed use. Current owners, Puerta de la Esperanza L.P. plan to completely rehabilitate the building according to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards. The first floor will be marketed as commercial space for three to five tenants serving neighborhood needs. The upper floors will be configured as a small rental office and 14 residential apartments, with one-, two-, and three-bedroom units.

(end)

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

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(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

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(continued)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 3

Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

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Maps

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(end)

10. Geographical DataAcreage of Property less than one acre**UTM References See continuation sheet.**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1. Zone 18 Easting 697510 Northing 4674500

3. Zone Easting Northing

2. Zone Easting Northing

4. Zone Easting Northing

 See continuation sheet**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Norene Roberts and Gregory Farmer, consultants, with Betsy Friedberg, NR Director, MHCorganization Massachusetts Historical Commission date October 2002street & number 220 Morrissey Boulevard telephone (617) 727-8470city or town Boston state Massachusetts zip code 02125-3314**Additional Documentation****Submit the following items with the completed form:****Continuation Sheets****Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name Carlos A. Vega, Puerta de la Esperanza Ltd. Partnershipstreet & number 401 Main Street telephone (413) 533-9442city or town HOLYOKE state MA zip code 01040**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. 470 et seq.).**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Clovis Robert Block
Holyoke (Hampden), MA

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The parcel shown outlined in pencil on the accompanying plat map 028-03-012 in the City of Holyoke, consisting of a parcel measuring 82.5 feet fronting Main Street by 100 deep fronting Cabot Street.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes only the legal parcel described above which is historically associated with the nominated building.

(end)

PHOTOGRAPHS

- #1 View facing northeast showing Main Street façade. February 11, 2001.
- #2 View facing southwest showing Cabot Street side. February 11, 2001.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Robert, Clovis, Block
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MASSACHUSETTS, Hampden

DATE RECEIVED: 10/24/02 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/08/02
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/24/02 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/08/02
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 02001472

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 12/5/02 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



CLouis Robert Block

338-348 Main St., Holyoke
Hampden County, Massachusetts

Photographer: Norene A. Roberts

Date: February 11, 2001

Location of Negatives: Mass. Historical Commission, Boston, MA

View facing: Northeast

Photograph #1



Clovis Robert Block

338-348 Main St., Holyoke

Hampden County, Massachusetts

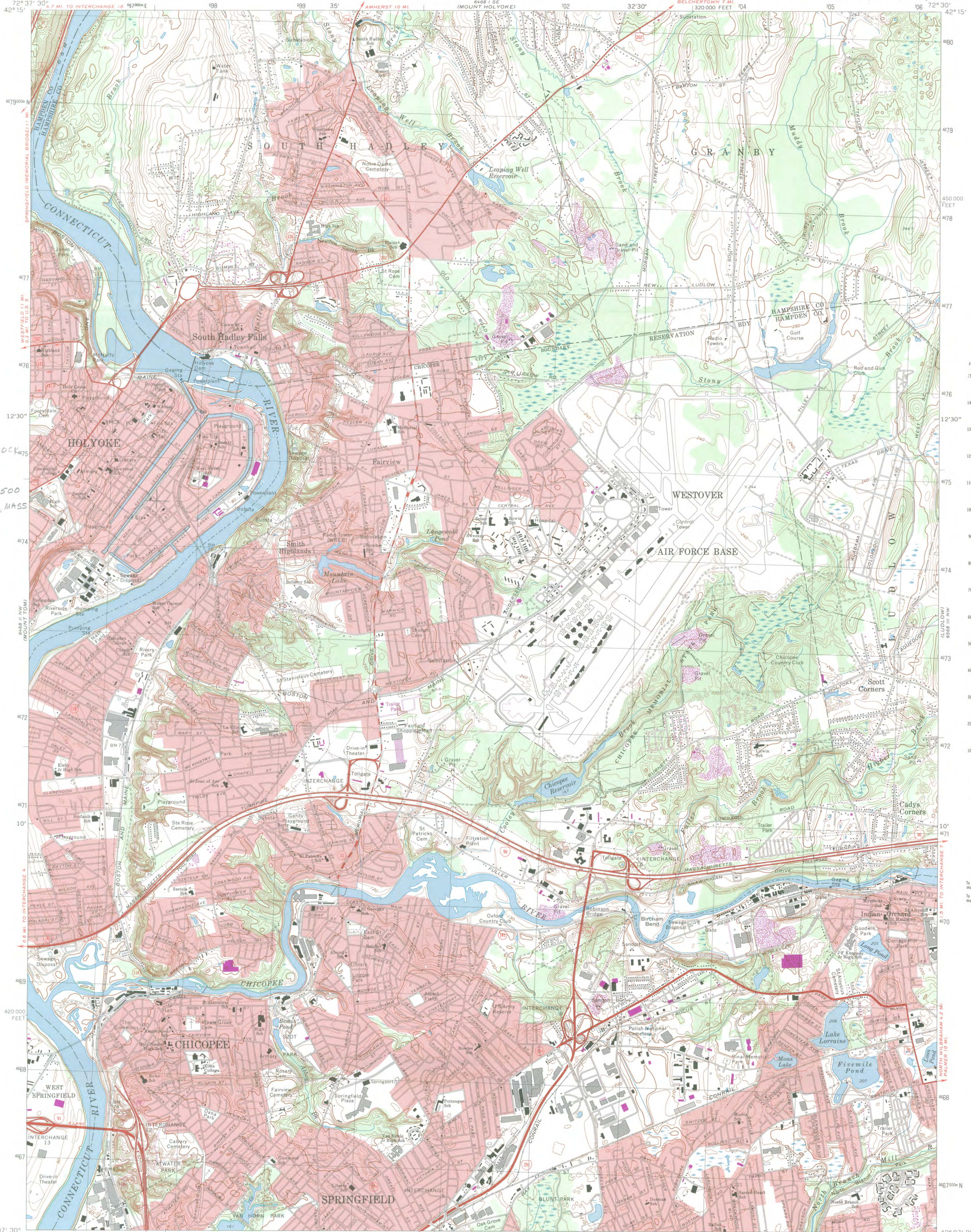
Photographer: Norene A. Roberts

Date: February 11, 2001

Location of Negatives: Mass. Historical Commission, Boston, MA

View facing: Southwest

Photograph # 2



CONVERSION SCALES

Feet	Meters
1500	450
1400	400
1300	350
1200	300
1100	250
1000	200
900	150
800	100
700	50
600	0
500	0
400	0
300	0
200	0
100	0
0	0

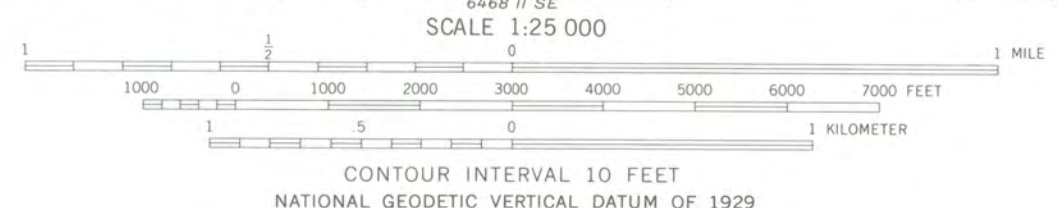
Feet Meters

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2	6096
3	9144
4	12192
5	15240
6	18288
7	21336
8	24384
9	27432
10	30480

To convert feet to meters multiply by 0.3048
To convert meters to feet multiply by 3.2808

CLOVIS ROBERT BLOCK
338-348 MAIN ST.
HOLYOKE, MA.
UTM 18 699510 4674500
SPRINGFIELD NORTH, MASS

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1933. Revised from
aerial photographs taken 1971. Field checked 1972
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,
zone 18
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries
of the National or State reservations shown on this map
Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with the State of
Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1975 and other
source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979



SPRINGFIELD NORTH, MASS.
N4207.5-W7230/7.5
1972
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6468 II NE-SERIES V814

DON GLERSON'S
No. Springfield Map, 5th
7548178 Springfield, MA
ESP US\$ \$4.25
001512



18

19

RACE

STREET

SARGENT STREET

HAMILTON STREET

CABOT STREET

MAIN

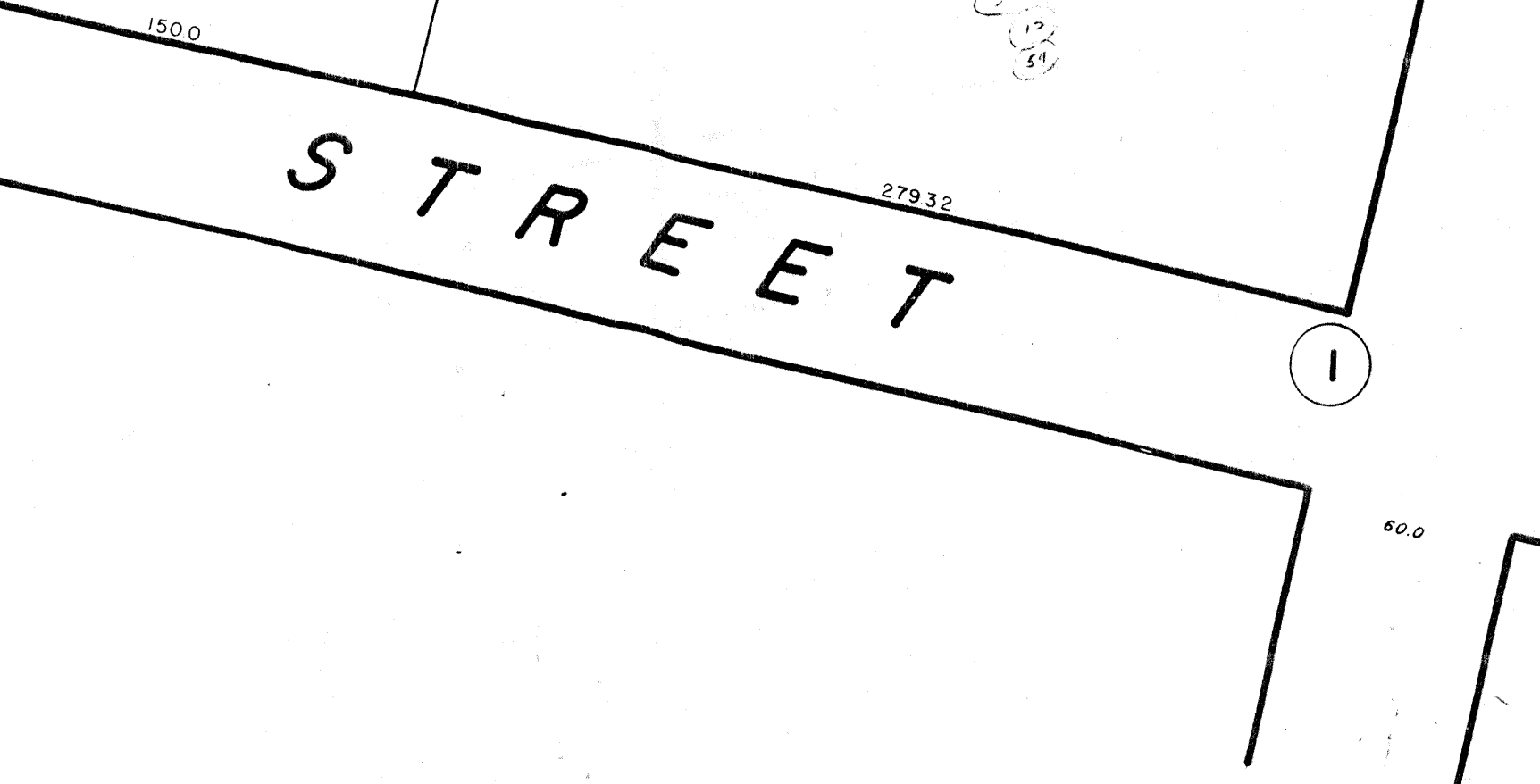
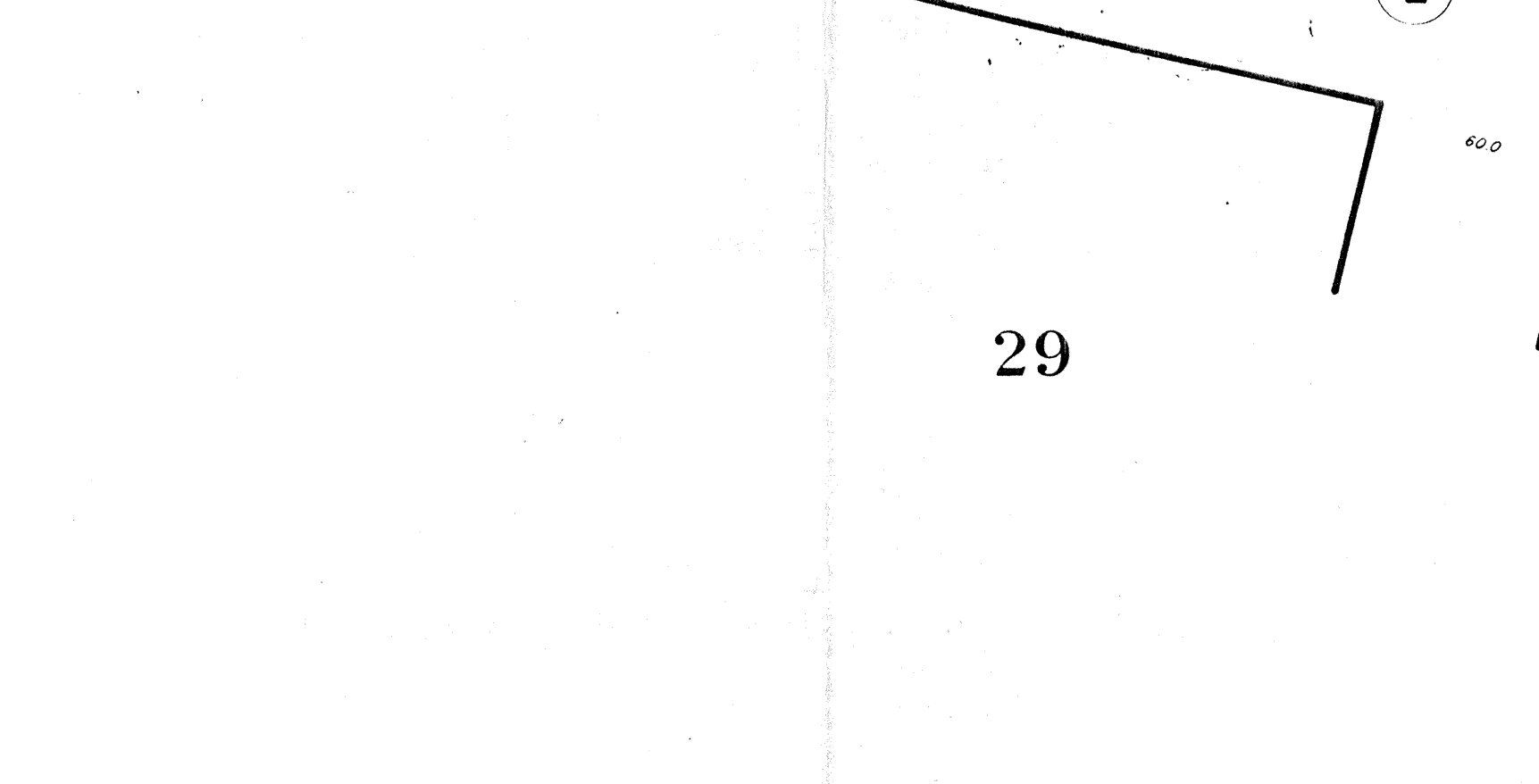
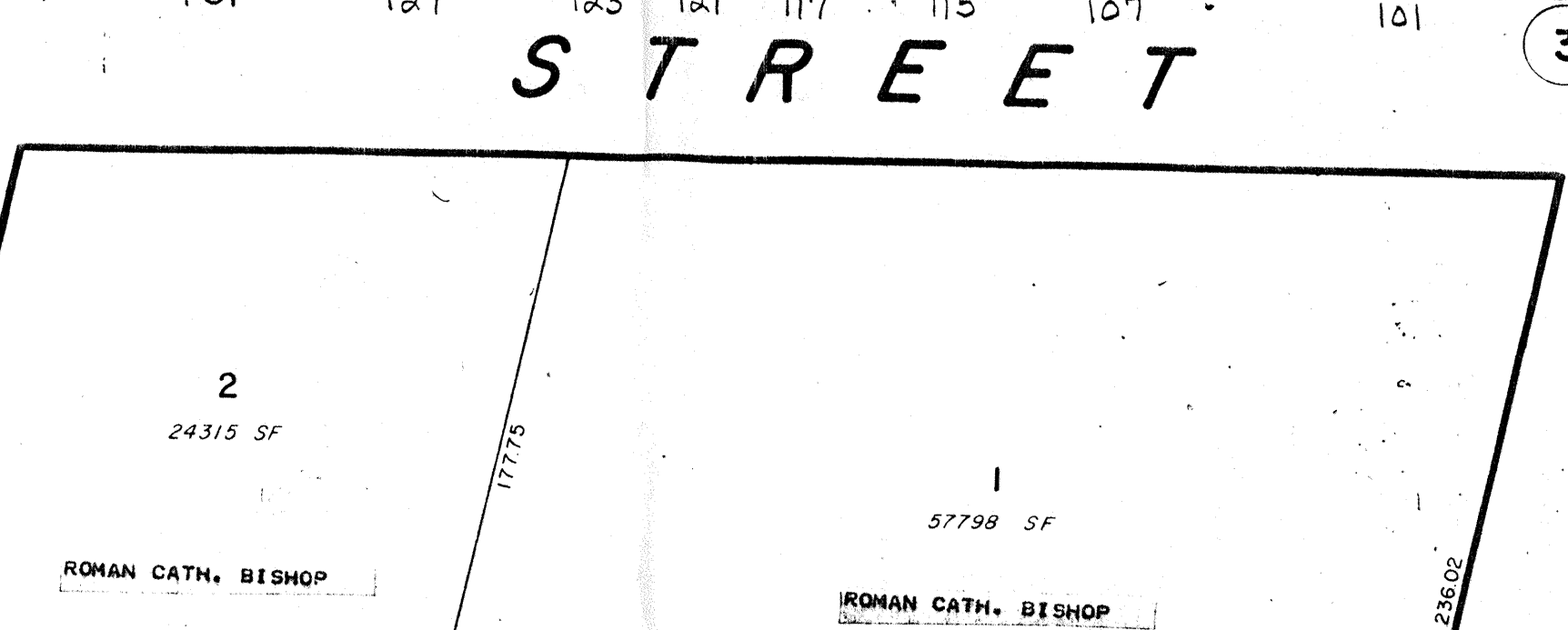
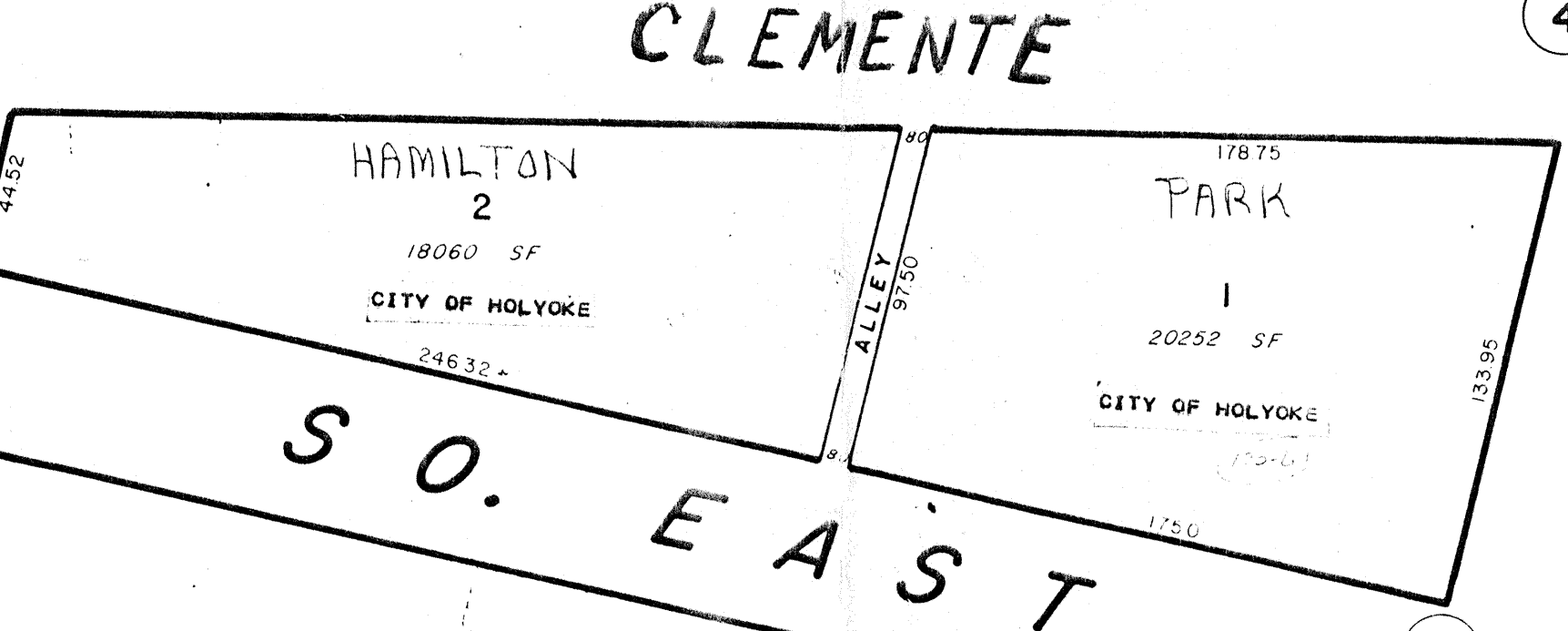
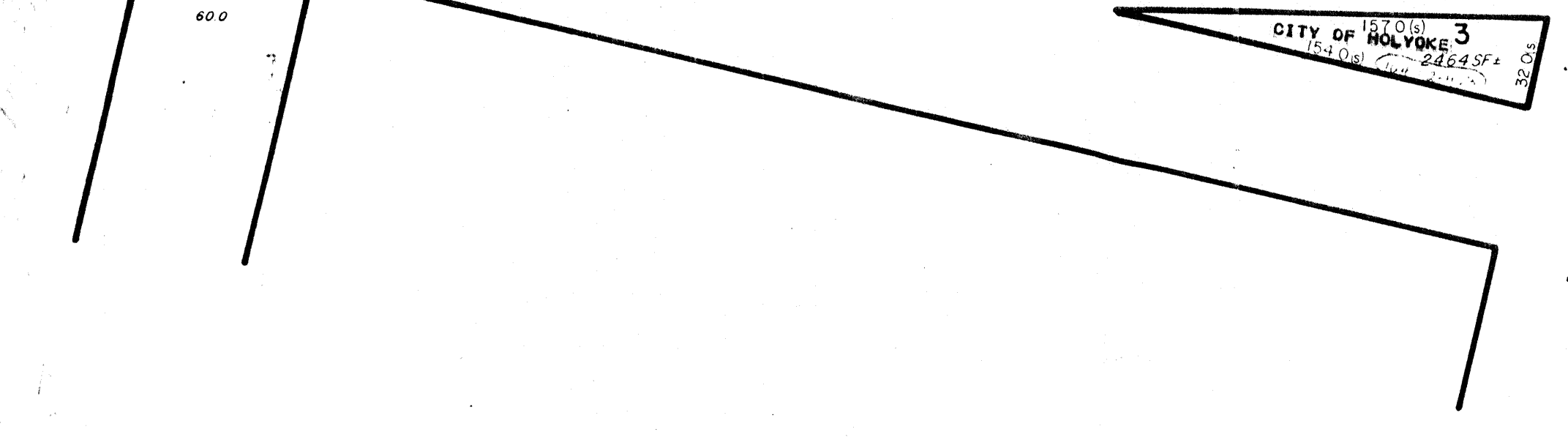
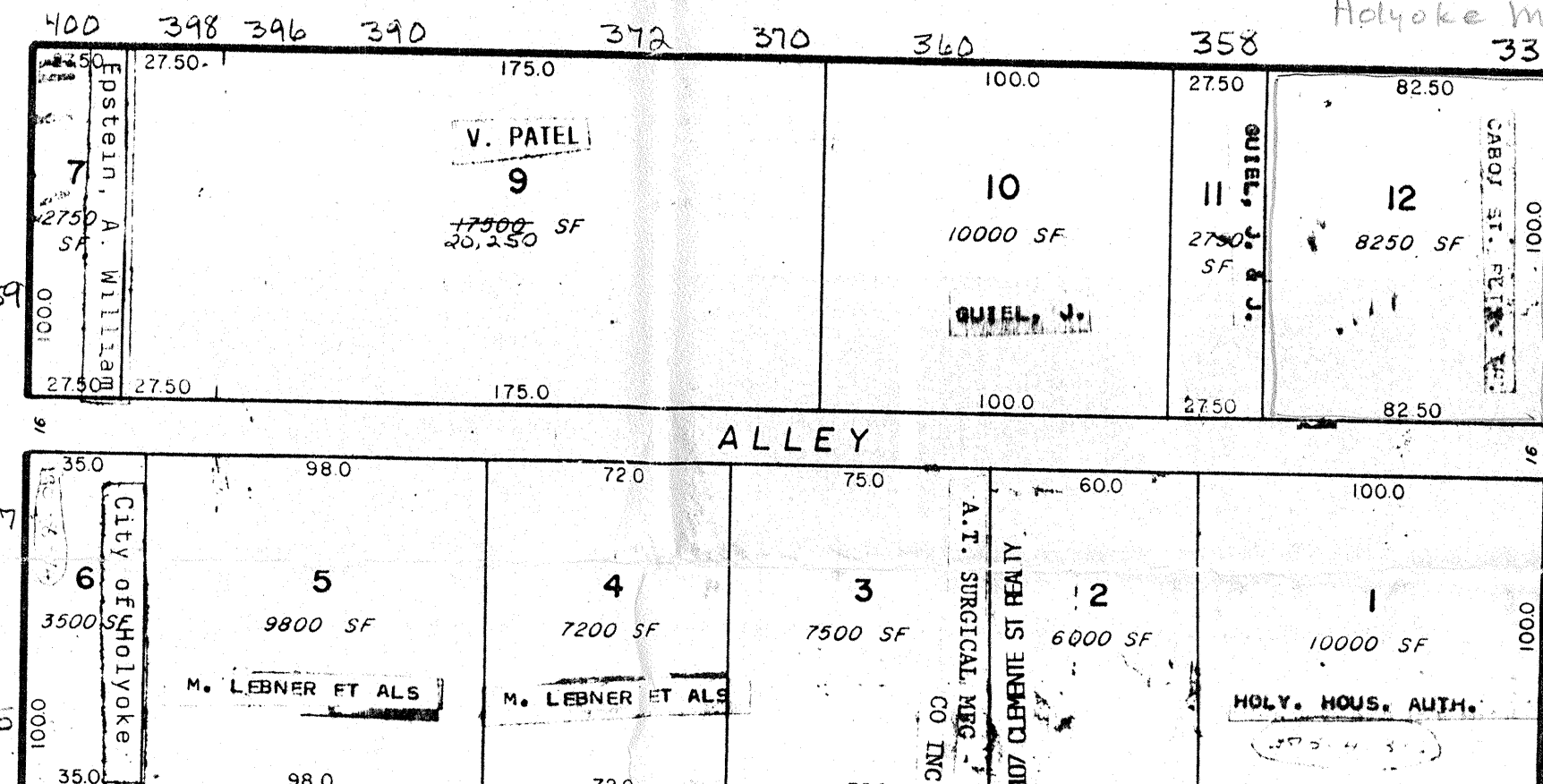
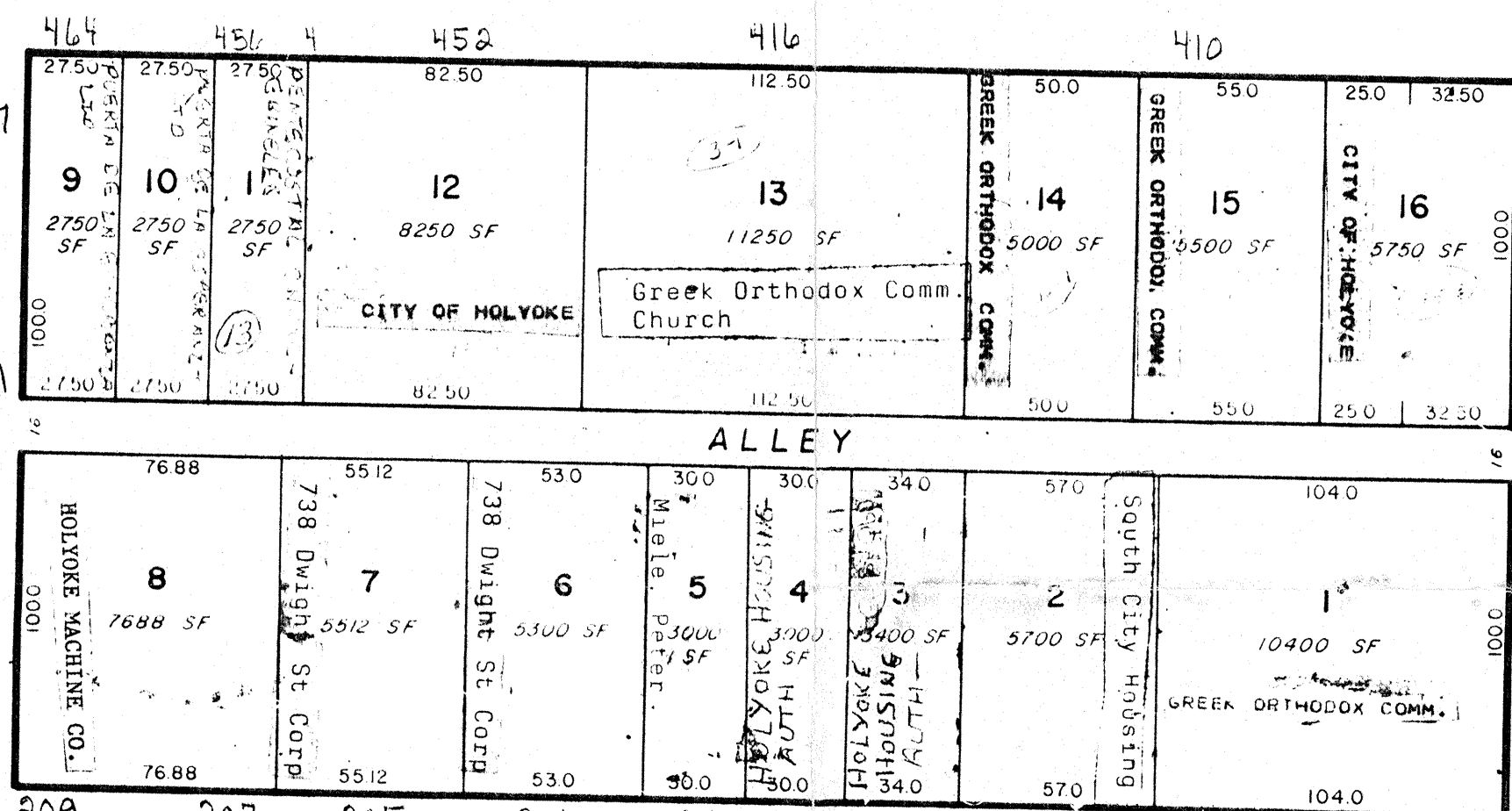
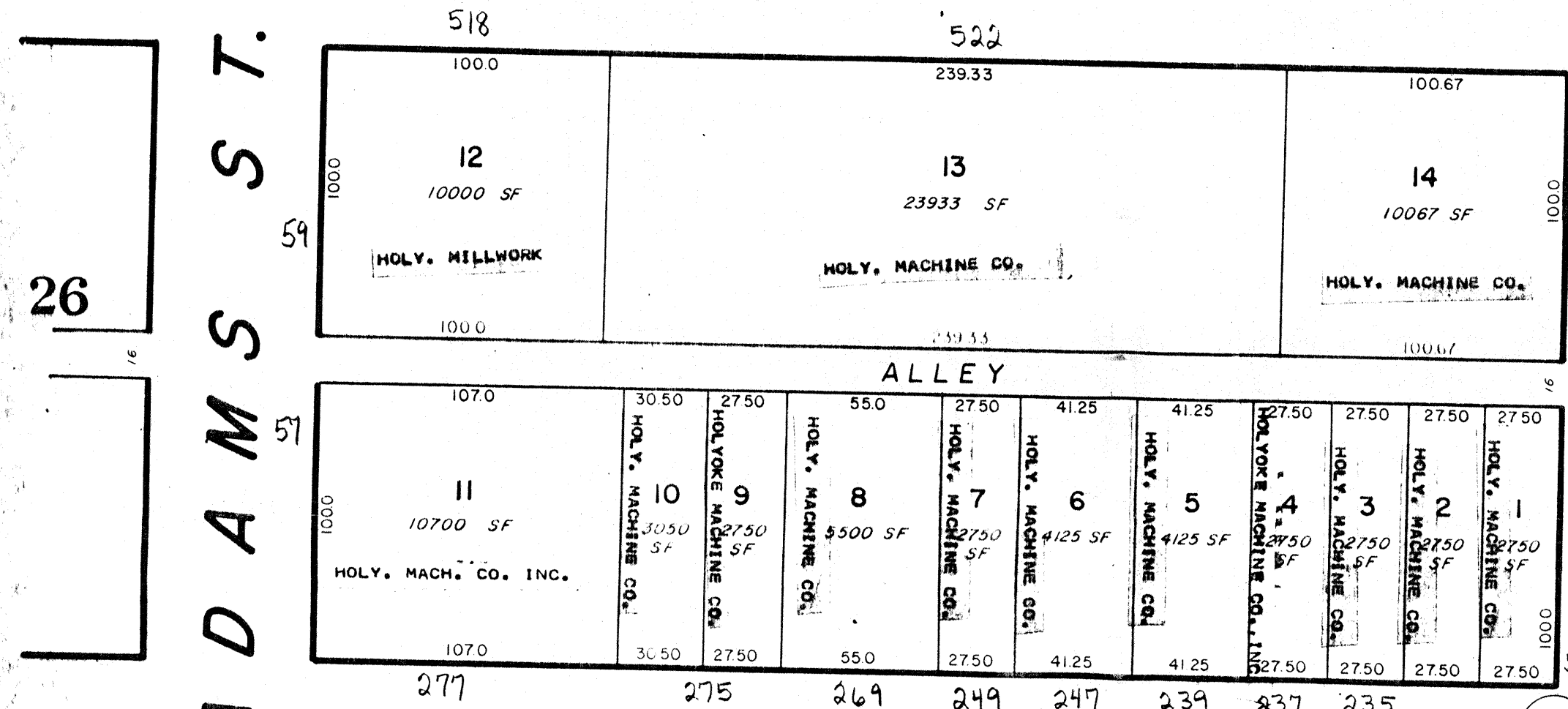
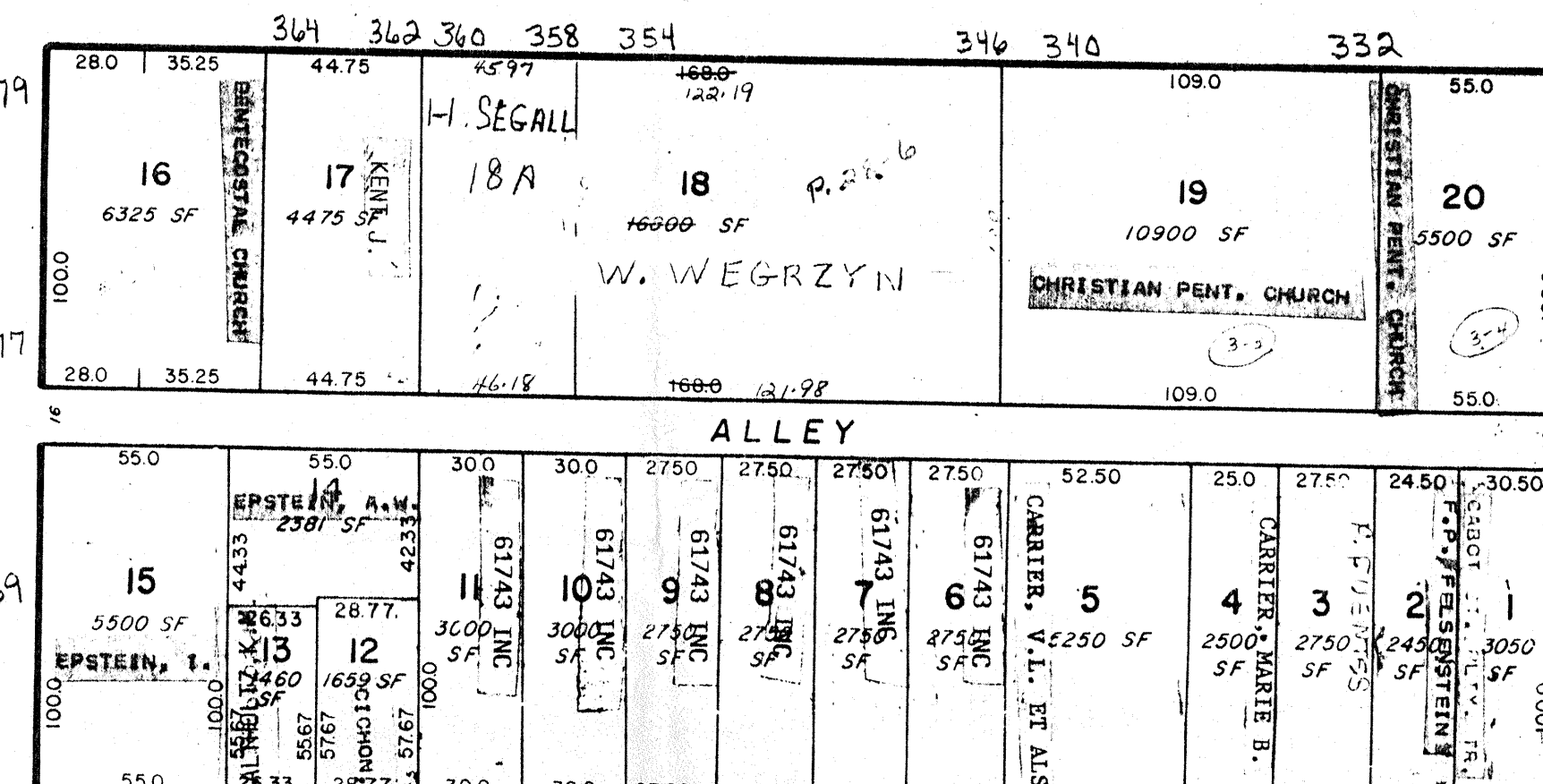
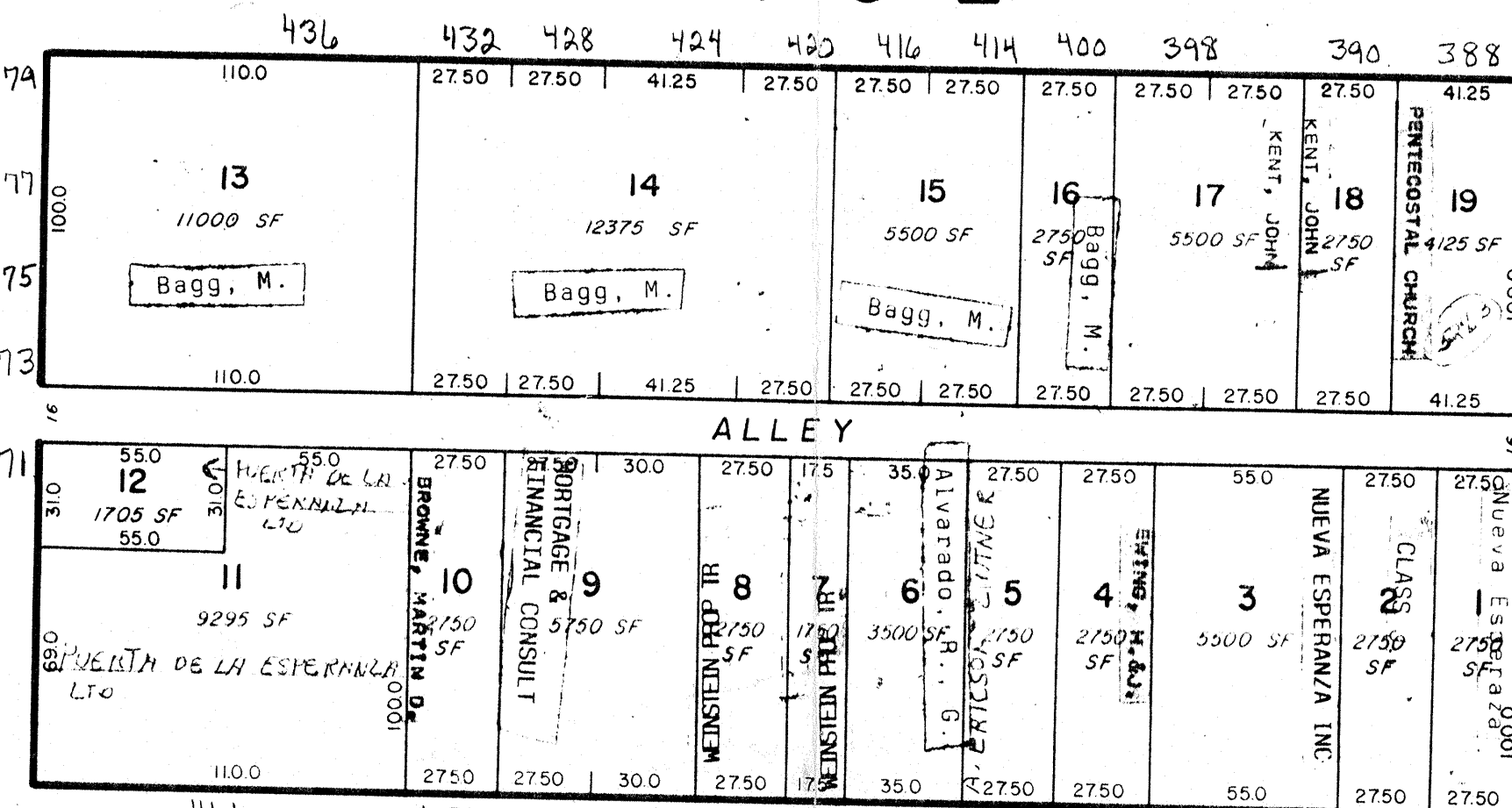
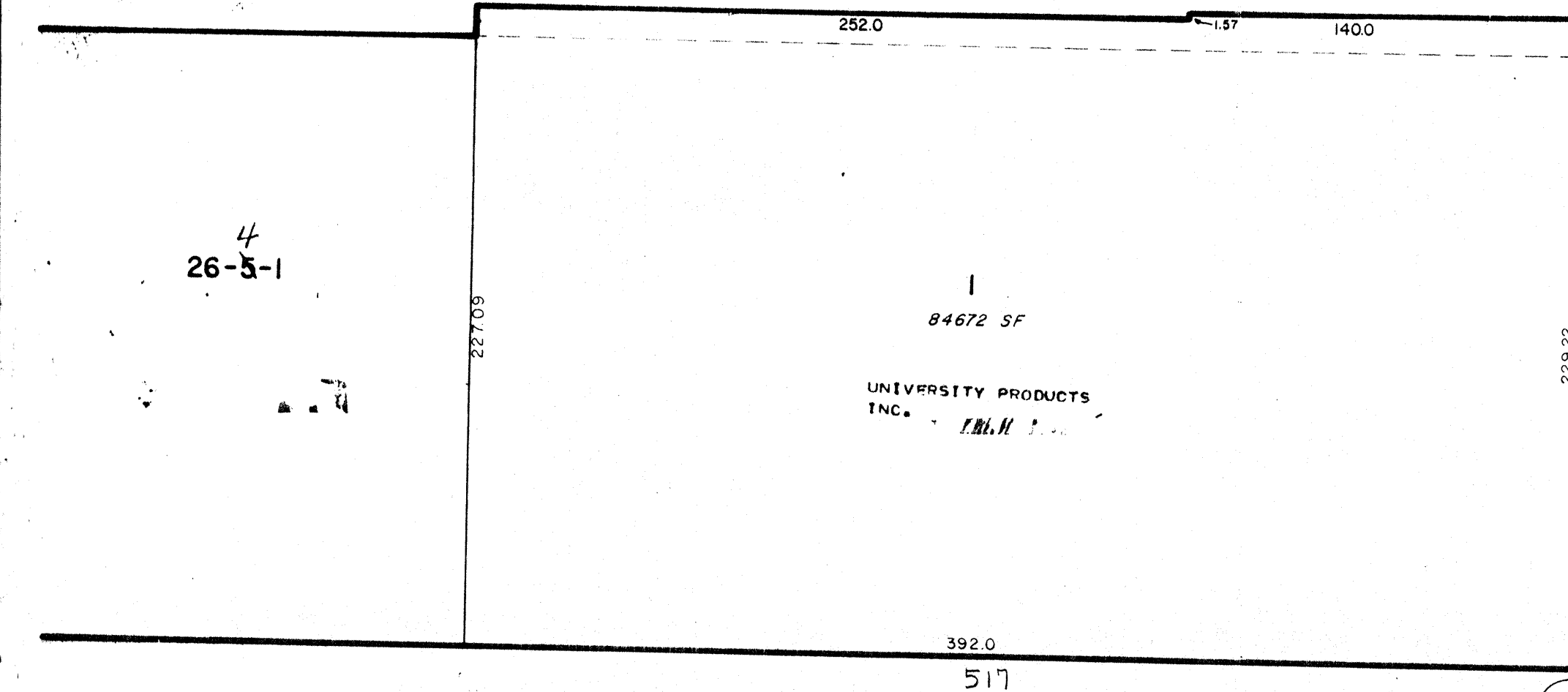
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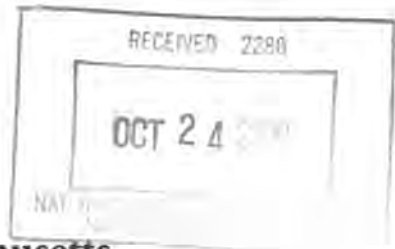
CLEMENTE

STREET

S. O. EAST

STREET





The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
William Francis Galvin, Secretary of the Commonwealth
Massachusetts Historical Commission

October 23, 2002

Ms. Carol Shull
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Mail Stop 2280, Suite 400
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the following nomination form:

Clovis Robert Block, 338-348 Main Street, Holyoke (Hampden), MA
HPCA #7850

The nomination has been voted eligible by the State Review Board and has been signed by the State Historic Preservation Officer. The owners of the property were notified of pending State Review Board consideration 30 to 45 days before the meeting and were afforded the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,

Betsy Friedberg
National Register Director
Massachusetts Historical Commission

enclosure

cc: Gregory Farmer, consultant
Olivia Mausel, Holyoke Historical Commission
Jack F. Hunter, Holyoke Planning Director
Carlos A. Vega, Puerta de la Esperanza
Michael Sullivan, Mayor, City of Holyoke