

FORM B – BUILDING

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
MASSACHUSETTS ARCHIVES BUILDING
220 MORRISSEY BOULEVARD
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS 02125

Assessor's Number USGS Quad Area(s) Form Number

D5/ 1/ 15/ /

Blue Hills

AVO.26

Town/City: Avon

Place: (*neighborhood or village*):

Photograph



View looking south from East Main Street.

Address: 53 East Main Street

Historic Name: Collins Carriage Factory

Uses: Present: Commercial

Original: Carriage Factory

Date of Construction: ca. 1865

Source: Deed

Style/Form: No style

Architect/Builder: Not known

Exterior Material:

Foundation: Not visible

Wall/Trim: Vinyl siding/vinyl trim

Roof: Asphalt Shingle

Outbuildings/Secondary Structures: None

Major Alterations (*with dates*): Ells added post-1916; Vinyl siding and vinyl sash windows (late 20th or early 21st C)

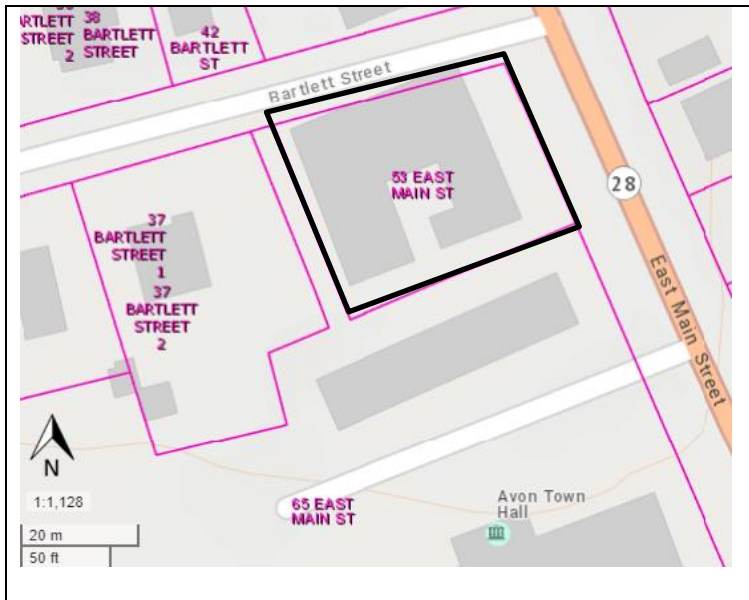
Condition: Fair

Moved: no ☒ yes ☐ **Date:**

Acreage: 0.32

Setting: The building is located amid a mix of commercial and residential buildings along State Route 28, a wide, two-lane roadway.

Locus Map



Recorded by: Stacy Spies

Organization: Avon Historical Commission

Date (*month / year*): March 2022

INVENTORY FORM B CONTINUATION SHEET

AVON

53 EAST MAIN ST

MASSACHUSETTS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

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☐ Recommended for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If checked, you must attach a completed National Register Criteria Statement form.

Use as much space as necessary to complete the following entries, allowing text to flow onto additional continuation sheets.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION:

Describe architectural features. Evaluate the characteristics of this building in terms of other buildings within the community.

The building is located on a level lot with a shallow set-back and separated from the roadways by a granite curb and asphalt-paved parking areas. The one-and-two-story building is capped with a side-gabled roof with a shallow overhang. Additions to the building over time have resulted in a C-shaped footprint. The building is covered with vinyl siding with vinyl trim. Large fixed-light windows are located at the north end of the east elevation; windows elsewhere are 1/1 vinyl sash.

The southernmost section of the building along East Main Street appears to be the original building. The white band of siding between the first and second stories on the east and south elevations likely indicates the former location of large top-hung sliding doors that would have allowed the carriages to be moved into and out of the building. The east elevation contains a metal personnel door, a single sash window, and a pair of sash windows at the first story; the recessed opening into which this pair of windows is set has the approximate dimensions of a vehicle door and may indicate an infilled garage bay. The second story contains two sash windows. On the south elevation, the first floor contains a pair of sash windows and a single window; the second story contains two single sash windows. A sash window is centered in the south gable peak.

The center section of the east elevation containing a metal overhead garage door was likely constructed as an addition to the original building. Two large, fixed-light windows are located adjacent to the first-story garage door. A single sash window is located at the second story. The north end of the building, set perpendicular to the first sections, was likely the second addition to the building. This addition contains a fixed-light window and sash windows on the east elevation. The north elevation contains four bays of sash windows and two metal doors at the east end of the first story. One-story ells are attached to the southwest corner of the building and at the northwest corner of the building. A one-story garage ell with a gable roof is located at the west end of the building along Bartlett Street. A metal overhead garage door is centered in the north elevation.

While the building has undergone substantial alterations that have resulted in a loss of integrity, the building is a rare survivor of its type.

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

Discuss the history of the building. Explain its associations with local (or state) history. Include uses of the building, and the role(s) the owners/occupants played within the community.

Wheelwright Bartlett Collins began his carriage shop business in Avon (then East Stoughton) in 1856.¹ Bartlett (given name Bartholomew) Collins (1836-1907) emigrated from Galway, Ireland to the United States in 1849 or 1851.² In 1864, Collins married Margaret Rooney (1843-1919),³ who was also born in Ireland. The couple had six children. At Avon's first town meeting in 1888, Bartlett Collins was elected to the first Board of Selectmen. In 1865, Bartlett Collins purchased a ¼-acre lot on the west side of East Main Street from widow Sally Robbins for \$200;⁴ Collins likely had the existing building constructed around that time. Collins expanded the business with the purchase of an additional lot, with buildings, on the west side of East Main Street in 1876.⁵ The Collins house was located at the present-day location of town hall. Bartlett Collins' carriage factory employed

¹ Hanna: 55.

² U.S. Passport application, Stephen B. Collins (son of Bartholomew and Margaret Collins). August 4, 1920; and 1900 U.S. Census. Accessed February 28, 2022.

³ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/158696881/margaret-collins>. Accessed Feb. 28, 2022.

⁴ Norfolk County Registry of Deeds Book 335, p. 152.

⁵ Norfolk County Registry of Deeds Book 483, p. 473.

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wheelwrights and carriage painters. When Bartlett Collins' son, John J. Collins, came of age, he joined his father's business as a blacksmith. Beginning in the 1890s, the business is listed in city directories as "carriage maker and blacksmith."

John J. Collins (1865-1941)⁶ and his wife, Nellie (1877-1951), were married in 1905. John J. Collins continued the business after his father's death in 1907. The 1911 directory lists Collins' business as "blacksmith, wheelwright, and carriage painter." By 1920, the business also included automobile painting.⁷ In the 1920s, John J. Collins began work as Avon Town Clerk, a position he held until at least 1940. It appears that John J. Collins closed his shop in the 1930s. John and Nellie Collins lived next door to the shop, at 37 Bartlett Street (AVO.14).

By 1940, the American Shoe Shank Company was using the building at 53 East Main Street.⁸ In 1947, Nellie Collins and her son, John B. Collins, sold the building to American Shoe Shank Company owners, Charles and Marjorie Willard.⁹ Charles and Marjorie Willard owned the property until 1964.¹⁰

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⁶ <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/158696878/john-j-collins>. Accessed March 2, 2022.

⁷ U.S. Census. 1920.

⁸ City Directory. 1940.

⁹ Norfolk County Registry of Deeds Book 2667, p. 198.

¹⁰ Norfolk County Registry of Deeds Book 4133, p. 84.

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SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION



View looking west from East Main Street.



View looking northwest from East Main Street.



Undated photograph, reproduced in Hanna.



1876 Atlas of Norfolk County.



1916 Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas.