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HOLOCAUST AT LYNN



“Like Berlin in 1945” was how many described the devastation that covered 6½ acres in downtown Lynn, Mass. The losses included \$70 million in real estate and property and, sadly, the physical remnants of Lynn’s history as one of the nation’s major shoemaking centers. *Photograph courtesy Lynn Daily Evening Item.*

“You’re looking at the history of shoe manufacturing in this country, and it’s gone,” said Brian Magrane, chairman of the Lynn, Mass., Economic Development & Industrial Corp., in the aftermath of the worst fire in the city’s history. The blaze—believed to have been the work of an arsonist—destroyed 17 buildings and damaged 9 others. The smoke could be seen as far away as Boston, 10 mi. southwest of Lynn.

The fire broke out early in the morning of Nov. 28 in the vacant Hutchinson’s Wharf Building (1907). It spread quickly, requiring the evacuation of 600 people and the efforts of 500 firemen before it was brought under control 10 hours later. The fire destroyed numerous shoe factories and associated buildings in an area known as the industrial loft section of Lynn. Many of the vast, mostly empty brick factories were being renovated to serve as offices, stores, and apartments.

One of those lost was the Breed Building No. 2 (1890), which was to have served as a visitor center for the new Mass. Heritage Park in Lynn. Work on the park will proceed at a harbor site that escaped the fire. The Vamp Building (1906, 1907), a former shoe factory converted to housing that was the cornerstone of the city’s revitalization efforts, suffered extensive damage but is being repaired. Most of the buildings that were destroyed dated from the turn of the century, since another fire had destroyed the same district in 1889. Lynn was once one of the largest shoe manufacturing centers in the world and was the industry leader in the adoption of the factory system and the sewing machine. *More*

1982 ANNUAL CONFERENCE
Harrisburg, Pa., May 7-9. Preview on page 9.