

**Usefulness**  
**An Autumn Reflection**

An uncommonly warm late October day.  
I decide to take advantage; leave my office  
wander outside, dodge traffic crossing  
Howard Street and plunk myself down on  
one of the benches facing the Dennison Complex.  
SMOC's Dennison Complex, once owned briefly, now leased.

Signs of the season envelop me, the fading  
of the green canopy above my head allows  
me to track the sun's lower trajectory  
across a startlingly clear sky  
in front of me cars maneuver to park,  
doors slam and people stream into and  
out of our front door.

I drift back to another warm afternoon  
more than four years ago.  
I sat on the same bench, the street quiet,  
the building in front of me empty.  
Trying to figure out what to do  
with this imposing monolithic edifice we  
had just purchased.

A buzz in my ears. First a whisper,  
then a roar. From the building.  
Make me useful! Again! Please!

I admit to being mystified by this until I came  
across some old photos of the complex  
several months later. Post-war  
black and white.

The first shows Howard Street at noontime  
the street chock full of folks walking. Heading  
home or downtown for lunch. Staring at  
it you can hear the lunchtime whistle.  
In another it's night, the picture  
taken from an elevation across the  
railroad tracks portrays a completely  
illuminated complex.

At first, the contrast between what Dennison had been and what our organization had filled the front building with used to unsettle and unnerve me. Dennison made things, an economic engine that promised and delivered jobs and economic security. SMOC provides services to the poor and disadvantaged and hires a workforce To carry out its mission.

Gradually, however, I began to see connecting threads between the past and the present.

Imbuing a sense of hope in the future providing resources to achieve self-sufficiency and serving as a welcoming beacon for newcomers are the links I discerned.

The chasm between what the complex was and what it had become no longer seems so vast to me.

A bridge materialized.

The building got its wish.

Jim Cuddy  
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