

# NOMINATION OF HISTORIC BUILDING, STRUCTURE, SITE, OR OBJECT

## PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

### PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION

SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM (CD, EMAIL, FLASH DRIVE)  
ELECTRONIC FILES MUST BE WORD OR WORD COMPATIBLE

#### 1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: 500 N. Christopher Columbus Blvd.

Postal code: 19123 Councilmanic District: 1

#### 2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: The Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company

Current/Common Name: The Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company

#### 3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

☒ Building ☐ Structure ☐ Site ☐ Object

#### 4. PROPERTY INFORMATION

Condition: ☐ excellent ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ poor ☐ ruins  
Occupancy: ☒ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☐ unknown  
Current use: Storage

#### 5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach

#### 6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach

#### 7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1891 to 1932 and 2001 to 2016

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: Warehouse A, Ice Machine House, & Boiler House & Stack (1891); Machine Shop (c1900); Warehouse B (c1901); Warehouse C (1910)

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: Warehouse A, Ice Machine House, & Boiler House & Stack (1891): Allen B. Rorke, Contractor & Builder; and Warehouse C (1910): Cramp & Co., Engineers

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: Warehouse A, Ice Machine House, & Boiler House & Stack (1891): Allen B. Rorke, Contractor & Builder; and Warehouse C (1910): Cramp & Co., Engineers

Original owner: The Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company

Other significant persons: Not Applicable

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- ☐ (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- ☐ (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☒ (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- ☐ (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- ☒ (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- ☐ (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- ☒ (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- ☒ (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- ☒ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

## 8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Please attach

## 9. NOMINATOR: THE KEEPING SOCIETY OF PHILADELPHIA DATE: 2 AUGUST 2019

Author Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian Author Allee Davis, Architectural Historian

Author Kelly Wiles, Architectural Historian Email Keeper@keepingphiladelphia.org

Street Address 1315 Walnut Street, Suite 320 Telephone 717.602.5002

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19107

Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

## PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: August 2, 2019

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: May 15, 2020

Date of Notice Issuance: May 15, 2020

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: 500 NCCB Fee LLC

Address: 500 N Christopher Columbus Blvd

City: Philadelphia

State: PA Postal Code: 19123

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: 3 December 2020

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: 8 January 2021

Date of Final Action: 8 January 2021; Criteria for Designation C, E, H, I, and J

*\*See following page for revised  
boundary approved by PHC on  
8 Jan 2021*

☒ Designated ☐ Rejected

12/3/18

## Regulated Boundary for 500 N Christopher Columbus Blvd

On 8 January 2021, the Philadelphia Historical Commission designated the property with the revised boundary shown below (and agreed upon by the owner and nominator in a signed agreement dated 13 November 2020, with the Boiler House deemed non-contributing). The property will be regulated based on the boundary shown and the outlined contributing and non-contributing resources.

### Including within boundary:

#### Contributing

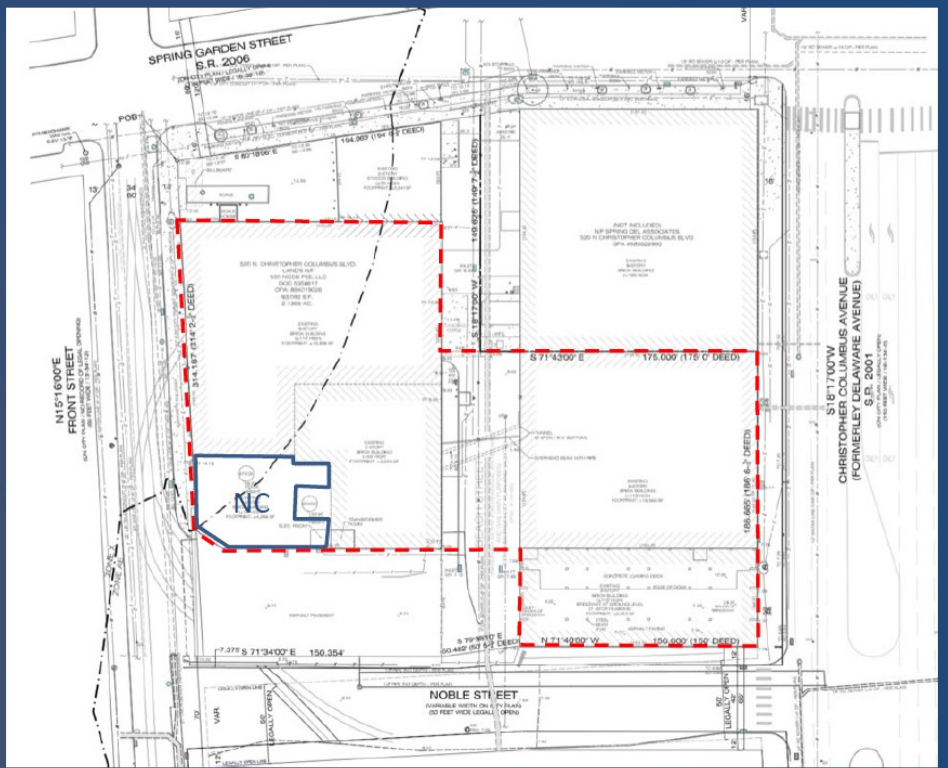
- Warehouse A
- Warehouse B
- Warehouse C
- Machine Shop
- Ice Machine House
- Stack

#### Non-Contributing

- Boiler House

### Outside of boundary:

- North End of Parcel
- South End of Parcel
- North and South End of Beach Street ROW



## NOMINATION FOR THE PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

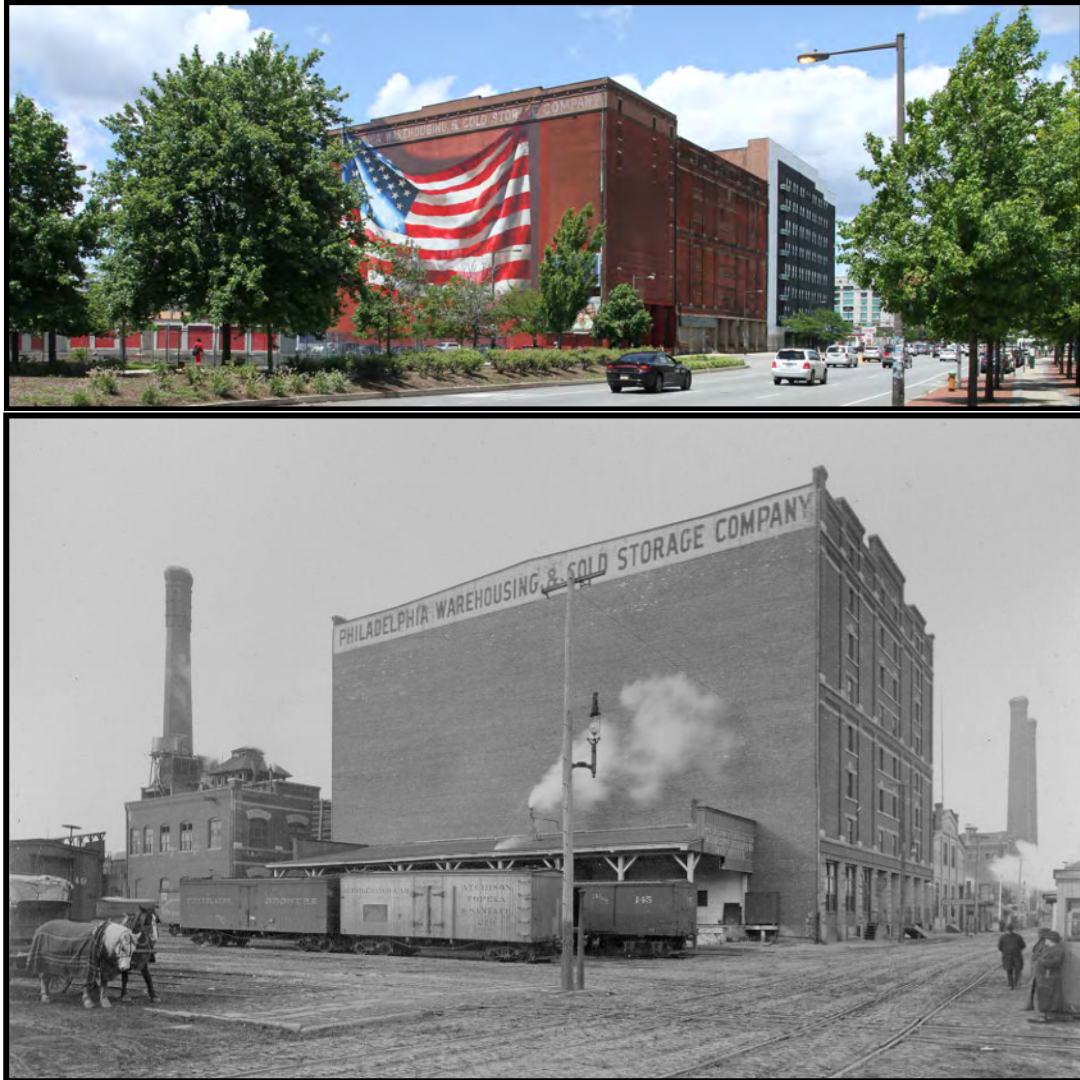


Figure 1. above: Looking North. Source: Allee Davis, 2019. below: the Stack (on left), the Ice Machine House (on left), and Warehouse A prior to the construction of Warehouse B. This photograph was taken in the 1890s by the Warren-Ehret Company. Source: Hagley Digital Archive.

### **PHILADELPHIA WAREHOUSING & COLD STORAGE COMPANY 500 N. CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS BOULEVARD PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA**



**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION** *\*This is a description of the legal parcel. The approved regulated boundary is shown at the beginning of this document.*

The boundary for the subject designation is as follows:

ALL THAT CERTAIN lot or piece of ground, Situated in the Fifth Ward of the City of Philadelphia with the buildings and improvements thereon erected, describe according to an As-Built Plan made for Philadelphia Warehouse and Storage Company by the VPH Associates, land surveyors dated April 6, 1994 to it; BEGINNING at a point formed by the intersection of the Southwesterly side of Spring Garden Street (120 feet wide) and Southeasterly side of Front Street (60 feet wide); thence extending from said point of beginning South 80 degrees 18 minutes 06 seconds East along the said Southwesterly side of Spring Garden Street and partly crossing the bed of former Beach Street (reserved as a right of way for drainage purposes, water main purposes and gas main purposes, confirmed by ordinance 4/16/1984) the distance of 194 feet 0-¾ inches to a point; thence extending South 18 degrees 17 minutes 00 seconds West within the bed of former Beach Street the distance of 149 feet 7-½ inches to a point; thence extending South 71 degrees 43 minutes 00 seconds East further crossing the bed of said former Beach Street and partly passing through a wall the distance of 175 feet 0 inches to a point on the Northwesterly side of Christopher Columbus Boulevard (105 feet wide); thence extending South 18 degrees 17 minutes 00 seconds West along the said Northwesterly side of Christopher Columbus Boulevard the distance of 186 feet 6-¼ inches to a point on the Northeasterly side of Noble Street (variable width as per Ordinance dated 2/14/1898); thence extending North 71 degrees 40 minutes 00 seconds West along the said the Northeasterly side of Noble Street the distance of 150 feet to a point on the Southeasterly side of said former Beach Street; thence extending North 79 degrees 38 minutes 10 seconds West along the said the Northeasterly side of Noble Street, and re-crossing the bed of said former Beach Street the distance of 50 feet 5-¼ inches to a point on the Northwesterly side of said former Beach Street; thence extending North 71 degrees 34 minutes 00 seconds West along the said the Northeasterly side of Noble Street the distance of 150 feet 4-¼ inches to a point on the said Southeasterly side of Front Street; thence extending North 15 degrees 16 minutes 00 seconds East along the said Southeasterly side of Front Street the distance of 314 feet 2-¼ inches to a point on the said the Southwesterly side of Spring Garden Street, being the first mentioned point and place of beginning.

OPA/BRT Account No. **884019026**.

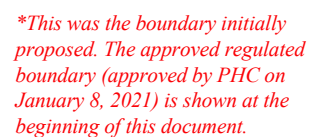


Figure 2. The boundary for the subject property is delineated in red. Source: Philadelphia Water.



Figure 3. Bird's eye view of the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex. Source: Google 2019.





Figure 4. View from North Front Street looking north towards the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.

## 6. PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

Anchoring the southern end of the City of Philadelphia's Northern Liberties neighborhood and prominently overlooking the Delaware River waterfront, the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company is situated at the southwest corner of the intersection of Spring Garden Street and North Christopher Columbus Boulevard (Figure 3). The property is bordered by Spring Garden Street to the north, North Christopher Columbus Boulevard to the east, Noble Street to the south, and North Front Street to the west. A portion of North Beach Street partially bisects the industrial complex to the north, stemming from Spring Garden Street. Remnants of rail siding that lead to and from loading areas of the industrial complex are visible throughout, particularly in the southern part of the property and along North Front Street. Adjacent to the east are a number of piers extending into the Delaware River, one of which was used for several years as Festival Pier at Penn's Landing and is currently being redeveloped with the construction of residential high-rise buildings. The subject property is otherwise neighbored primarily by commercial development (Figures 3-5).

Today, the property comprises several components that were constructed at various points between 1891 and 1910. Lining North Christopher Columbus Boulevard is an eight-story, masonry cold storage warehouse built in 1891 (Warehouse A) and an adjoining eight-story, masonry warehouse (Warehouse B) built circa 1901. Adjacent to the west of Warehouse A and B is Warehouse C, the Machine Shop (c1900), the Ice Machine House (1891), and the Boiler House and Stack (1891). The Machine Shop and the Ice Machine House read as one building from the street with the boiler house and its 130-foot chimney stack appending the west elevation of the Ice Machine House. Warehouse C is separated from Warehouses A and B by North Beach Street, yet the buildings are physically connected by a large pipe supported by a metal platform.



*Figure 5. The east façade of both Warehouses A (right) and B (left) of the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex. Note the colossal pilasters and stringcourses that organize the symmetrical fenestration patter. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.*

A strong example of industrial architecture exhibiting elements typical of the Renaissance Revival style, Warehouse A is a large, impressive masonry building in both size and scale (Figure 5). Measuring eight bays wide and anchoring the building, the ground floor features ashlar, quarry-faced masonry on the east and west facades which frames a series of large openings that consist primarily of rolling garage doors (Figure 5). On the east façade, the southern three bays include the primary entrance and multi-light, aluminum-sash windows, sheltered by a slate-tiled, pent roof (Figure 7).

The upper stories of Warehouse A contrast with the heavy ground floor by its brick construction which extends from a steel I-beam adorned with roundels (Figure 5). Laid in a running bond, the brickwork features colossal pilasters and corbelling. A series of heavy, quarry-faced, masonry stringcourses delineate the first/second, fourth/fifth, and seventh/eighth floors, as well as emphasize windows that are framed by the colossal pilasters. The window openings on the third, sixth, and eighth floors are accented by quarry-faced, segmental stone window heads which provide rhythmic visual interest to the large industrial building. Today, a majority of the original window openings have been bricked in; however, the original fenestration pattern remains discernable.

Adjoining Warehouse A to the south is Warehouse B, a more restrained, stripped down interpretation of the Renaissance Revival style that is more expressive of its industrial function. The first floor of Warehouse B is a steel-framed throughway that historically allowed for the passage of railcars for purposes of receiving and shipping (Figures 6, 7, & 14). On the south wall

lining the throughway are a variety of openings and other passageways that facilitate interior access to Warehouse A. The east and west facades of Warehouse B are perforated by a limited number of window openings with simple stone sills and lintels, most of which have since been bricked in. Floors three, four, and five are largely void of window openings due to the original use of these floors as cold storage.



*Figure 6. Perspective view of the east and south facades of Warehouse B (left), with a partial view of Warehouse A on the right.  
Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.*

The south elevation of Warehouse B is entirely void of fenestration. Here, the expansive brick wall features artist Meg Saligman's mural "Our Flag Unfurled" (2001, then titled "Tribute to the Flag"; 2016, restored and renamed) one of Mural Arts Philadelphia's most visible and iconic murals (Figures 6 and 14). Crowning the building, the distinct eighth story of Warehouse B features a corbelled cornice at the seventh/eighth story and a more ornate corbelled cornice lining the roof's parapet. On the south, the parapet is stepped and features stone coping. Below, fading paint reads "PHILADELPHIA WAREHOUSING & COLD STORAGE COMPANY" which can be seen from afar (Figure 8).





Figure 7. Perspective view of the west and south facades of Warehouse B (right), with a partial view of Warehouse A on the left. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.



Figure 8. West elevation of the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex. Warehouse C (left) dominates the photo with the prominent 130-foot chimney stack on the right. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.

Warehouse C is situated to the rear (west) of Warehouses A and B, lining North Front Street. Built of reinforced concrete and brick-bearing walls, Warehouse C is stylistically complementary to Warehouses A and B with simple Renaissance Revival-style detailing throughout. Warehouse C is comprised of an eight-story, L-shaped warehouse (Figures 8, 9, 16, 17, 18, & 19). The exterior of the warehouse is characterized by large expanses of brick and minimal fenestration, which features gauged, brick-arched window openings with stone sills. On the east façade, the



ground floor is punctured by seven large openings presently occupied by modern rolling garage doors. The openings feature gauged, brick arches with prominent stone keystones with similar stone used at the shallow springing point. On the west façade, the ground floor features a similar arrangement to the east façade but the gauged, brick-arched openings exhibit multi-light, wood sash, plywood, and a pedestrian entryway. The middle bay is a rectangular opening concealed by a large, modern rolling garage door. On both the east and west facades, a stone belt course lines the top of the large, arched openings. At the eighth story, similar to Warehouse B, a corbelled brick cornice at the bottom and top of the story frames fading paint that prominently reads "PHILADELPHIA WAREHOUSING & COLD STORAGE COMPANY" on the west and north facades.

The Machine Shop, the Ice Machine House, and the Boiler House and Stack append the south elevations of Warehouse C. Both the Machine Shop and the Ice Machine House consist of two-story buildings (Figure 9). Despite being built in two phases, the Machine Shop and the Ice Machine House featured a unified primary (east) elevation that is a bold example of the Renaissance Revival-style. The east elevation is symmetrical in design with brick pilasters flanking large, arched window openings that are each topped with heavy, quarry-faced, gauged stone. Quarry-faced, stone stringcourses demarcate the floors of the buildings and brick corbelling further accentuates the brickwork. The base of the east elevations features two courses of ashlar, quarry-faced stone interrupted by a double-door entry in the center. The arched openings continue on the south and west façades and feature brick, gauged arches. Similar to many of the other window openings throughout the industrial complex, the windows of this building have been enclosed with brick, cement block, or glass block. Only from an aerial view (Figure 3) can you see that the Machine Shop has a flat roof, and that the Ice Machine House features a hipped roof and two sets of brick parapets that separated the original Ice Machine Room from the Pumping Room.



*Figure 9. View of the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex from North Front Street. The Ice Machine House is in the foreground, and Warehouse C, an L-shaped building, is in the rear. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.*

Appending the west elevation of the Ice Machine House, the Boiler House and Stack is a low-slung, one-story brick building that stands in striking contrast to its 130-foot chimney stack. The building features a typical industrial fenestration with large, garage-sized openings and arched openings, many of which have been bricked in; however, the original design remains discernable. Likely added after the original construction, the southwest corner of the building is canted due to the presence of rail siding used by the warehouse for receiving and shipping (Figures 20 & 21). The west façade (Figure 21) is primarily a sparse, brick wall with pedestrian entryways - one of which has since been sealed with concrete block - and a small window. Here, the roofline is stepped descending towards Noble Street. Remnants of a 130-foot chimney stack are visible atop of the roof. Adjacent to the east of the remnants is the dominating octagonal, brick, 130-foot chimney stack. The top of the chimney stack is ornamented with brickwork that stylistically ties together the Renaissance Revival-style elements of the entire industrial complex and is another commanding visual of the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company that anchors the southern end of the city's Northern Liberties neighborhood.

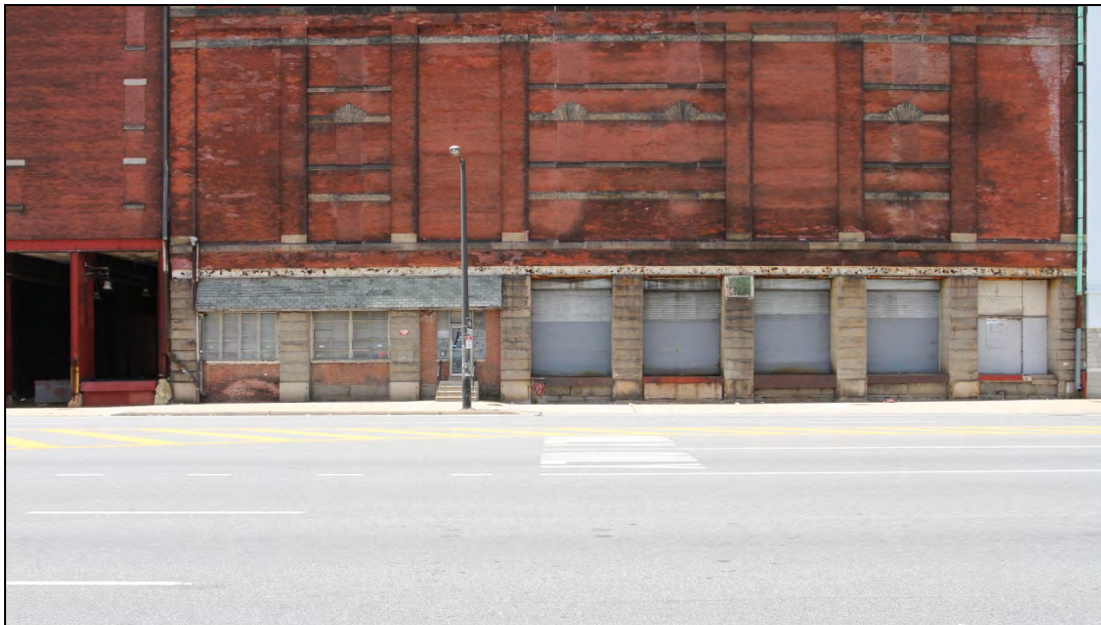


Figure 10. View along North Christopher Columbus Boulevard looking towards the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.



Figure 11. View looking south along North Christopher Columbus Boulevard towards the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex, showing the east façade of Warehouses A (right) and B (left). Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.





*Figure 12. Detail view of the east façade of Warehouse A of the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.*



*Figure 13. Raking view of the ground floor on the east façade of Warehouse A of the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex. Note the ashlar, quarry-faced masonry that anchors the warehouse into its site. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.*





Figure 14. View of the throughway and extant rail siding that historically facilitated the passage of railcars for shipping and receiving in support of the company's operations. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019



Figure 15. Looking north towards the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.





Figure 16. View of the north façade of Warehouse C of the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.



Figure 17. Looking along North Beach Street which bisects the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex. The Independent Electric Plant and Warehouse C are visible on the left. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.





Figure 18. View along North Front Street of the west façade of Warehouse C of the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.



Figure 19. View along North Front Street of the west façade of Warehouse C of the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.





Figure 20. General view from North Front Street of the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.



Figure 21. View from North Front Street towards the Independent Electric of the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.

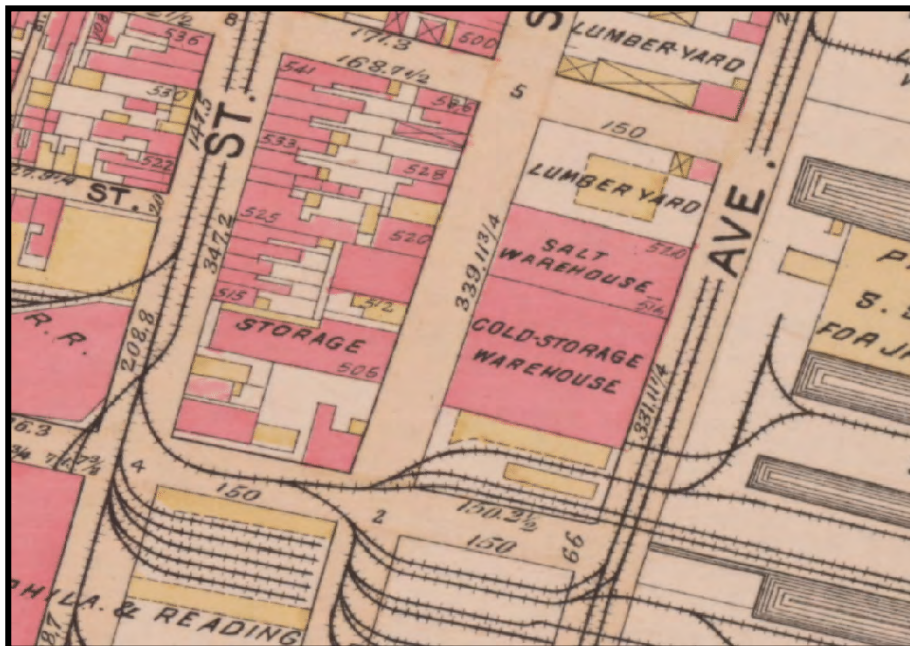


Figure 22. Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 1895. (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley and Co.) Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

## 7. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Known by the names of the 500 North Columbus Boulevard is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The subject property, including four of its buildings, satisfies the following Criteria for Designation, as enumerated in Section 14-1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

- (c) *Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style.*
- (e) *Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;*
- (h) *Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; and*
- (j) *Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.*

The period of significance dates from the time Warehouse A was constructed in 1891 through the time when the last buildings, the Independent Electric Plant and Warehouse C, were constructed on the property was constructed in 1910, ending in 1932, the date of the last record available showing the prominence of the firm in cold storage and warehousing in Philadelphia. The period of significance also includes the 2001 when the American flag mural was first painted through 2016 when the mural was restored.





Figure 23. An early photograph of Warehouse A, the Ice Machine House, and the Boiler House and Stack of the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company, as shown in a national book on such facilities. Source: *Cold storage and freezing warehouses equipped the Pontifex-Hendrick Refrigeration System.* (The Hendrick Manufacturing Co., 1897).

## Criterion J

The Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company is significant for its association with the commercial and industrial growth and heritage of Philadelphia from the time of its founding through the first half of the twentieth century. The subject property is an exemplary specimen of a complex designed, built, and used for cold storage and ice manufacture. In the period prior to wide-spread refrigeration, the advent of cold storage warehouses and ice plants were integral to the effective and safe transfer and storage of food for the city's growing population.<sup>1</sup> Serving one of the largest cities in the United States in 1891—as it remains to-date, facilities like the subject property were imperative to the city's growing demands, enabling food and ice to be more widely available for Philadelphians. In addition, facilities of this type also reliably supported other industries, including breweries and dairies.

While largely overshadowed in modern times by the universal expansion of commercial and residential, in-home technologies, the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company was significant in the growth and availability of the cold storage and artificial ice manufacturing in Philadelphia during the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth. The initial construction of the subject property, including Warehouse A, the Ice Machine House, and the Boiler House and Stack, was considered “A Model Cold Storage House” at the time of its completion.<sup>2</sup> The trade journal, *Ice and Refrigeration*, recognized the “immense enterprise” with a full-page feature at the time of its completion in 1891. By 1897, the design and construction of Warehouse A included a Pontifex-Hendrick system of refrigerating machinery, which, in the 1890s, was one of the most advanced of the day. The refrigeration system was produced by the Hendrick Manufacturing Company, Ltd. in Carbondale,

<sup>1</sup> Jonathan Rees, *Refrigeration Nation* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), n.p.

<sup>2</sup> “A Model Cold Storage House,” *Ice and Refrigeration*. (July 1891), 31.

Pennsylvania.<sup>3</sup> Warehouse A, the Ice Machine House, and the Boiler House and Stack was recognized in 1897 as being among the best-known Cold Storage and Freezing Warehouses in America.<sup>4</sup> The subject property grew over time with expansions in 1901 and 1910.



Figure 24. "A Model Cold Storage House," *Ice and Refrigeration*. (July 1891), 31. Via Hathi Trust. Please note that the drawing shows a somewhat perverted view of the subject property, lining both buildings on Delaware Avenue, which they contradict in their own description of the property.

<sup>3</sup> In 1897, the subject property was equipped the Hendrick Brine Cooler for Ice and Refrigeration Machines, which was an Ammonia Compression System.

<sup>4</sup> Cold storage and freezing warehouses equipped the Pontifex-Hendrick Refrigeration System. (The Hendrick Manufacturing Co., 1897), 7.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the subject property was one of the largest facilities of its kind in Philadelphia, modeling establishments in New York City of a greater and somewhat similar size and scale, all occupying new, state-of-the-art facilities: the Central Stores of the Terminal Warehouse Company; the Warehouse of the Enterprise Cold Storage Company; and the Warehouses of the Manhattan Refrigerating Company. Other new warehouses, some larger and others of a similar size, existed in the cities across the country: the Warehouses of the Utica Cold Storage and Warehouse Company in Utica, New York; the Hanford Produce Company in Sioux City, Iowa; the Buffalo Cold Storage Company in Buffalo, New York; the Buffalo Cold Storage Company in Buffalo, New York; the Syracuse Cold Storage and Warehouse Company in Syracuse, New York; and the Richmond Street Warehouse of the Quincy Market Cold Storage Company in Boston, Massachusetts. The Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company, as well as its competitors, harnessed new technologies, facilitating the transportation, procurement, and, ultimately, consumption of food. These advances led to more wide-spread affordability and greater menu of products, as well as a fresh array of perishable goods. As previously stated, the eminence of the company is shown as it modernized its facilities over time, and, by 1922, was recognized as having the third largest storage square footage in the city.<sup>5</sup>

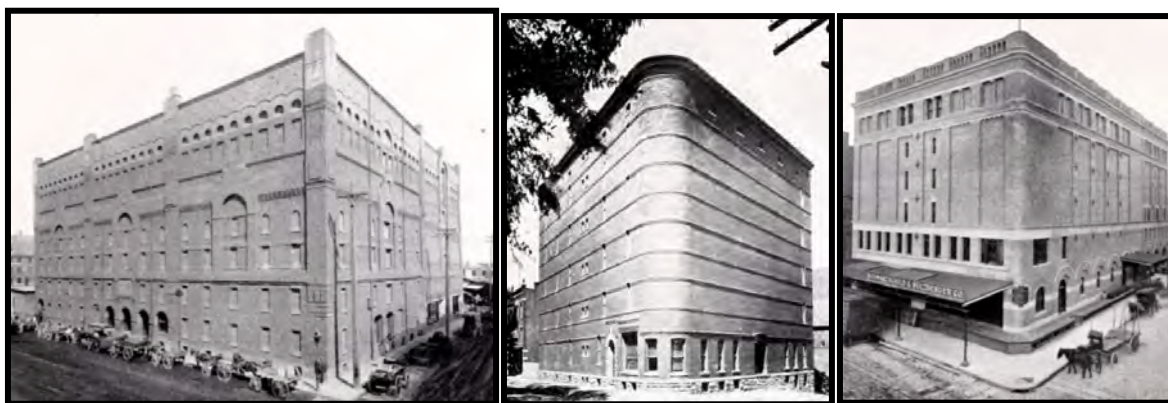


Figure 25. Left: the Richmond Street Warehouse of the Quincy Market Cold Storage Company in Boston, Massachusetts. Figure 26. Middle: the Syracuse Cold Storage and Warehouse Company in Syracuse, New York; and Figure 27. Right: the Warehouses of the Manhattan Refrigerating Company. Source: Cold storage and freezing warehouses equipped the Pontifex-Hendrick Refrigeration System. (The Hendrick Manufacturing Co., 1897).

While the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company was a significant firm of its kind in Philadelphia, it represents national trends in cold storage and ice manufacture, which was ultimately linked to the storage and transfer of food.<sup>6</sup> During the second half of the nineteenth century the advent and continual improvement of refrigeration technologies led to the establishment of ice manufacturing plants and cold storage warehouses throughout the nation.

<sup>5</sup> Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, War Dept., *The Ports of Philadelphia, Pa., Camden, N.J., and Wilmington, Del.*, Port Series, no. 4 (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1922), 243.

<sup>6</sup> National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for Terminal Refrigerating and Warehousing Company Building, Washington D.C.: 2014).



A very brief history was taken from the National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for Terminal Refrigerating and Warehousing Company Building in Washington D.C. to provide additional context about the advent and development of cold storage and ice manufacturing:

With the development of railroads, beginning in the early nineteenth century, came the possibility of shipping food long distances from its point of origin. Ice was a necessary component of successful food shipping. The harvesting, transportation, and storage of “natural” ice (i.e., ice harvested from frozen rivers and lakes, predominantly in northern New England) became an industry unto itself, facilitating the growth of the food supply and distribution market, and in turn the urbanization of the American populace. At the turn of the twentieth century, a combination of factors—pollution, technological advances, climate change, and concerns over the purity of natural ice—led to the rise of the artificial (or manufactured) ice industry.

The first artificial ice plant was erected in New Orleans in 1866, and the first dedicated cold storage building employing mechanical refrigeration was constructed in Boston in 1881.<sup>7</sup> In 1904, there were 620 cold storage warehouses nationwide; by 1925, there were more than 1,700. Such structures represented enormous investments. In addition to high equipment, construction, and operating costs, warehouse and plant owners faced large insurance premiums, usually two or three times that of typical warehouses. This was due to the dangers of using ammonia as a chemical refrigerant, which could cause fires or explosions if not handled properly.

Despite the high cost, centralized cold storage and ice manufacturing plants were vital links in a city’s food supply chain. They accepted the delivery of bulk shipments (usually by ship or train) that were then stored and redistributed to local markets and grocers. Additionally, the production of ice was necessary to keep food fresh in those establishments, as well as in the iceboxes of private homes.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> “Making Ice by Machinery,” *New York Times*, June 1, 1902.

<sup>8</sup> National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form for Terminal Refrigerating and Warehousing Company Building, Washington D.C.: 2014).; and Jonathan Rees, *Refrigeration Nation* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013), n.p.

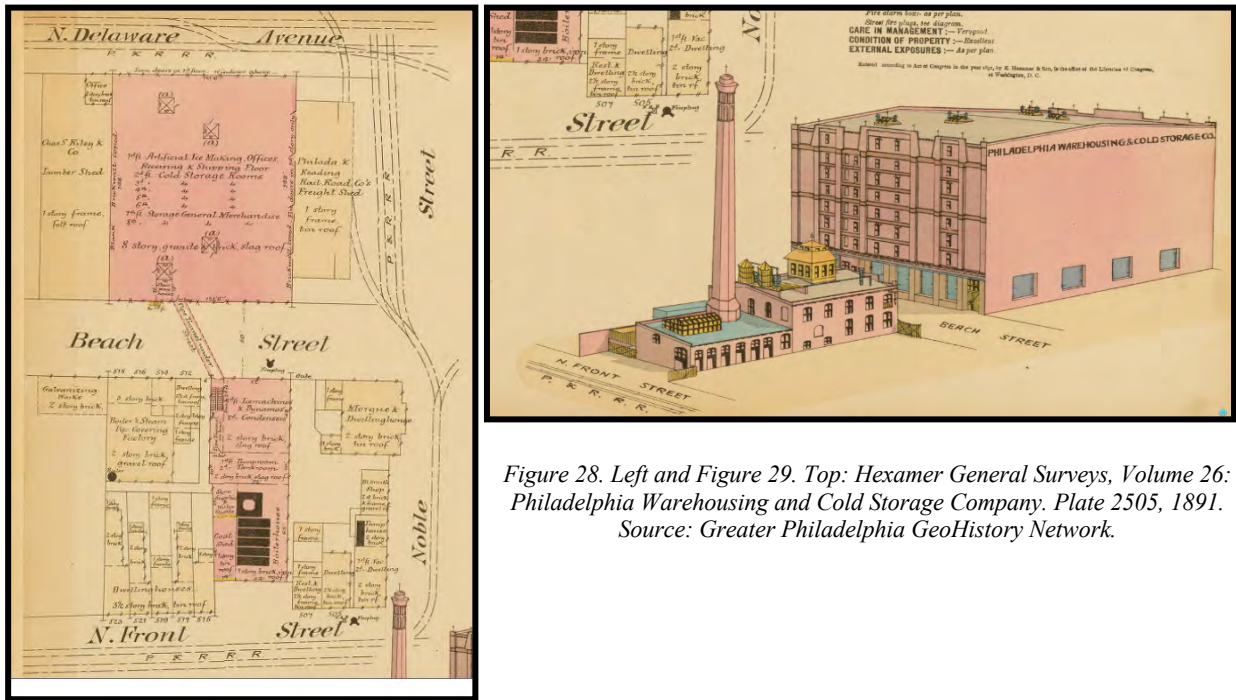


Figure 28. Left and Figure 29. Top: Hexamer General Surveys, Volume 26: Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company. Plate 2505, 1891. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

### Historic Context: Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company

Since its construction in 1891, the subject property at 500 North Columbus Boulevard has been the continual home of the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company. The company was originally incorporated in 1873 as the Mercantile Warehouse Company and was located at 1909, 1911 and 1913 Market Street. The company was an overarching enterprise described in a contemporary newspaper as a “A Big Serpent” and “vicious snake.” The company was incorporated as an insurance and storage company foremostly, however it had the power “to become possessed of, and hold all such equipments [sic] as may be necessary to their business and may hold unlimited land and property and connect the same with any railroads convenient thereto by one or more connections therewith.”<sup>9</sup> In 1886, the name changed to the “Merchants’ Warehouse, Safe Deposit and Trust Company.”<sup>10</sup> This moniker was short-lived, with the name changing one final time to the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company by 1889. In the last months of that year, plans were made to construct “an immense warehouse on Beach Street and Delaware Avenue, adjoining the Reading’s wharves at Noble Street...being 125x150 feet in dimensions, eight stories high and of slow burning construction.” For an approximate cost of \$400,000, the building would have an 800,000 cubic feet capacity for cold storage and an additional 500,000 cubic feet for dry good storage. (Figures 30 and 31).<sup>11</sup> Between October 1889 and March 1890, construction had been authorized and the company had acquired various parcels of land between Front, Nobel and Beach Streets and Delaware Avenue.<sup>12</sup> As a mode of

<sup>9</sup> “A Big Serpent.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. January 17, 1873. <https://www.newspapers.com>; “Bills Introduced.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. January 17, 1873. <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>10</sup> “Change of Name.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. March 12, 1886. <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>11</sup> “A Cold Storage Warehouse.” *Baltimore Sun*. November 29, 1889. <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>12</sup> “Additional Privileges.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. June 20, 1890. <https://www.newspapers.com>; “Real Estate Transfers.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. March 21, 1890. <https://www.newspapers.com>; Philadelphia Deed Michael

both fire and loss prevention, all mechanical equipment including boilers, engines and electrical equipment was located on the west side of Beach Street, away from offices, shipping receiving and warehouses.<sup>13</sup> The Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company hired famed Philadelphia contractor Allen B. Rorke to construct the new complex (Warehouse A, Boiler House and Stack and Ice Machine House).<sup>14</sup>

The first Board of Directors for the newly-founded Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company were elected in May, 1890, two months before the company officially opened for business on July 1. They were: William F. Drennan, AM Warthman, Samuel Jamison, William N. Moland, Abraham B Paul, Nicholas J Griffin, Benjamin Githins, Samuel Lee and Harry Michener.<sup>15</sup> During the last decade of the twentieth century, the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company became one of the most notable cold storage entities in the United States, so much in 1898, then president W.T. Robinson partnered with his counterparts of the Buffalo Cold Storage Company and the Western Union Storage Company of Chicago to attempt to combine all interests in cold storage throughout the country to end a ‘rate war’ between the nation’s largest companies. The fate of this “scheme” appears to have faltered, as the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company remained as a local business into the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup>

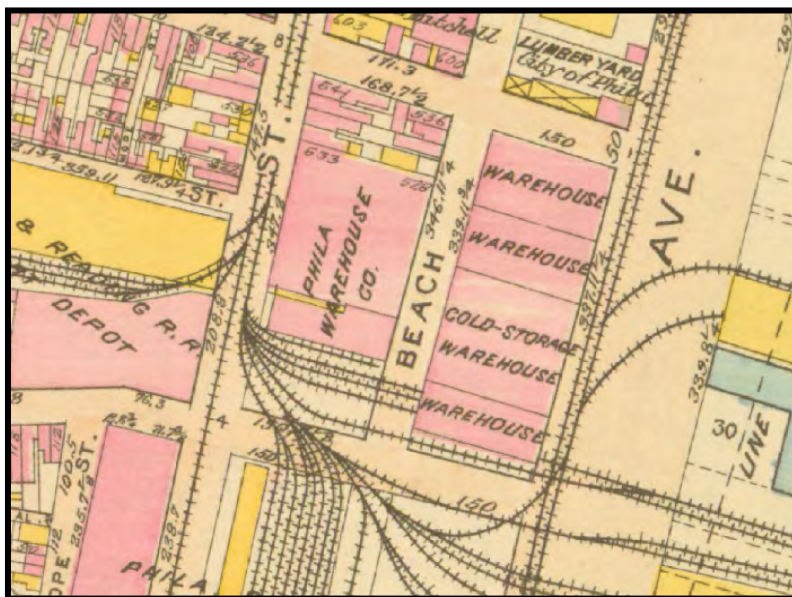


Figure 30. Atlas of the City of Philadelphia, 1910. (Philadelphia: G.W. Bromley and Co.) Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

J. McCusker to Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company (GGP 548: 507; 11/7/1889); Philadelphia Deed Sylvester D. Willis to Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company (GGP 554: 349; 10/4/1889); Philadelphia Deed John Decker to Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company (GGP 614:57).

<sup>13</sup> “A Cold Storage Warehouse.” *Baltimore Sun*. November 29, 1889. <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>14</sup> “Building and Real Estate Notes.” *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders’ Guide*. October 30, 1889. Vol. IV No. 43.

<sup>15</sup> “Annual Elections.” *The Times*. May 7, 1890. <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>16</sup> “Large Beach St. Building.” *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. July 3, 1909. <https://www.newspapers.com>.

Despite this apparent unsuccessful merger, the company grew and its Delaware Avenue plant underwent substantial alterations and augmentations between 1895 and 1916 (Figures 32-36). Along with direct Philadelphia and Reading Railroad rail lines on the property, in 1895, a large coal elevator was installed to aid in the company's operations.<sup>17</sup> The Machine Shop, a small two-story building was constructed on the north side of the Ice Machine House and Boiler House and Stack, was constructed in 1900. A year later, Warehouse B, an addition to Warehouse A was constructed on the south side of the original 1891 warehouse.<sup>18</sup> Machine Shop was added in c1900. The largest modification to the property occurred in 1910, when an additional eight-story warehouse (Warehouse C) was constructed on the west side of Beach Street between Green and Noble streets, essentially doubling the size of the property and its storage capacity. The company hired Cramp & Co., Engineers, to construct their \$300,000 buildings. Unlike their nineteenth-century counterparts on the east side of Beach Street, these buildings could be situated adjacent the boiler house as they were of fireproof construction, erected of reinforced concrete, brick-bearing walls, concrete floors and terracotta roofs.<sup>19</sup> The building also included the use of Raymond Concrete Piles.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> "Architects' Notes." *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*. July 3, 1895. Vol. X No. 27.

<sup>18</sup> Sanborn Map Company, Philadelphia Volume 3. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1916.

<sup>19</sup> Sanborn Map Company, Philadelphia Volume 3. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1916.

<sup>20</sup> Concrete Pile Construction. (Raymond International, Inc., 1910), 118. Via Hathi Trust.

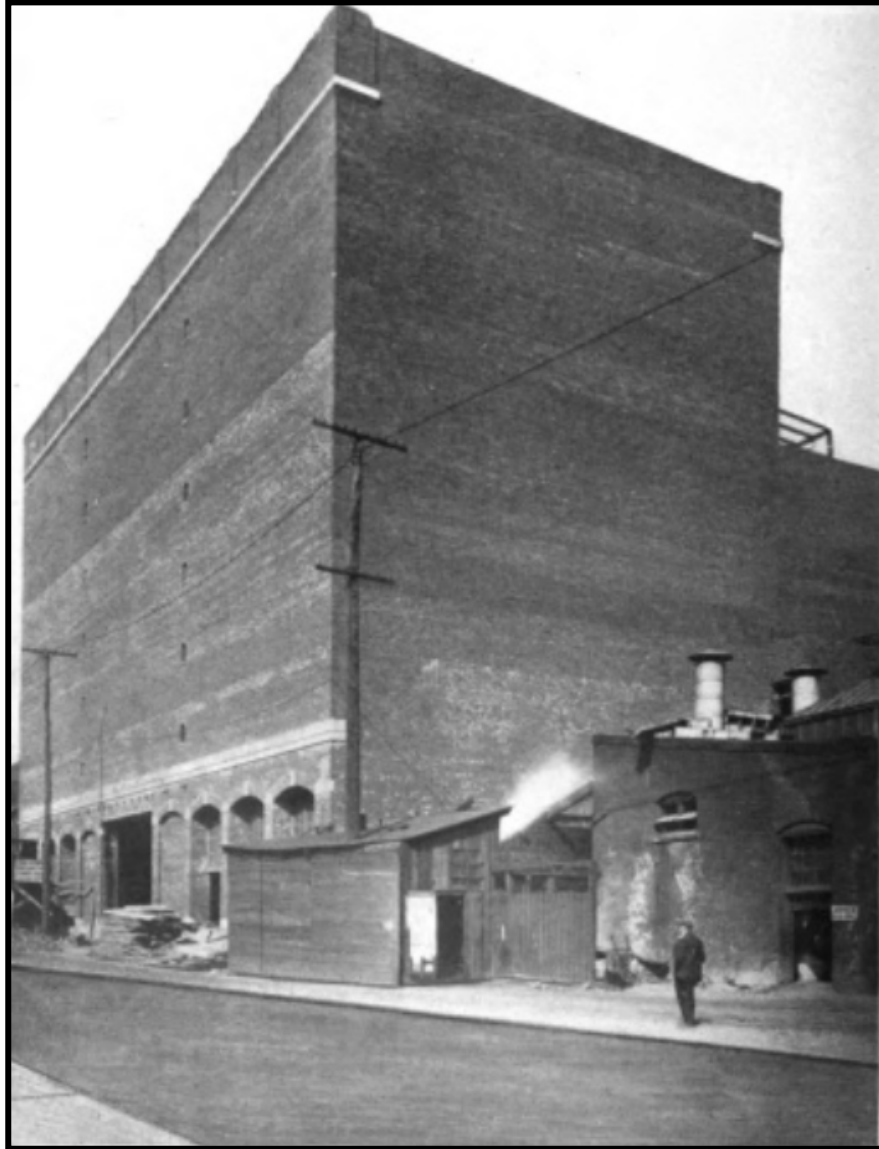


Figure 31. Warehouse C, built in 1910. Source: *Concrete Pile Construction*. (Raymond International, Inc., 1910), 118. Via Hathi Trust.

Throughout the twentieth century, the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company prospered as one of the city's largest cold storage plants in operation. In 1922, it was the city's largest cold storage company per total floor area with nearly 400,000 square feet, which was over double the capacity of the next largest company, Pennsylvania Cold Storage & Market Company.<sup>21</sup> In 1931, they upgraded their Delaware Avenue facilities with the installation of a new boiler and alterations to the existing boiler house including expanding the building by eight feet and raising the roof.<sup>22</sup> The company retained their status as the largest cold storage facility

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<sup>21</sup> Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, War Dept., *The Ports of Philadelphia, Pa., Camden, N.J., and Wilmington, Del.*, Port Series, no. 4 (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1922), 243.

<sup>22</sup> "Advance Construction News." *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*. December 30, 1931. Vol. XLVI No. 52.



into the 1940s and was also notable as the only cold storage company to provide dry storage service as well.<sup>23</sup>



Figure 32. Left: Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Co. Delaware Ave. Noble, Beach and Front Streets, Philadelphia. [graphic], 1910. Source: Oscar Beisert.

<sup>23</sup> Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, War Dept., *The Ports of Philadelphia, Pa., Camden, N.J., and Gloucester, N.J.*, Port Series, no. 7, (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1932), 95–115.





Figure 33. Top: Looking north with the subject property in the background on right in 1914. Source: DOR Archives via Phillyhistory.org.

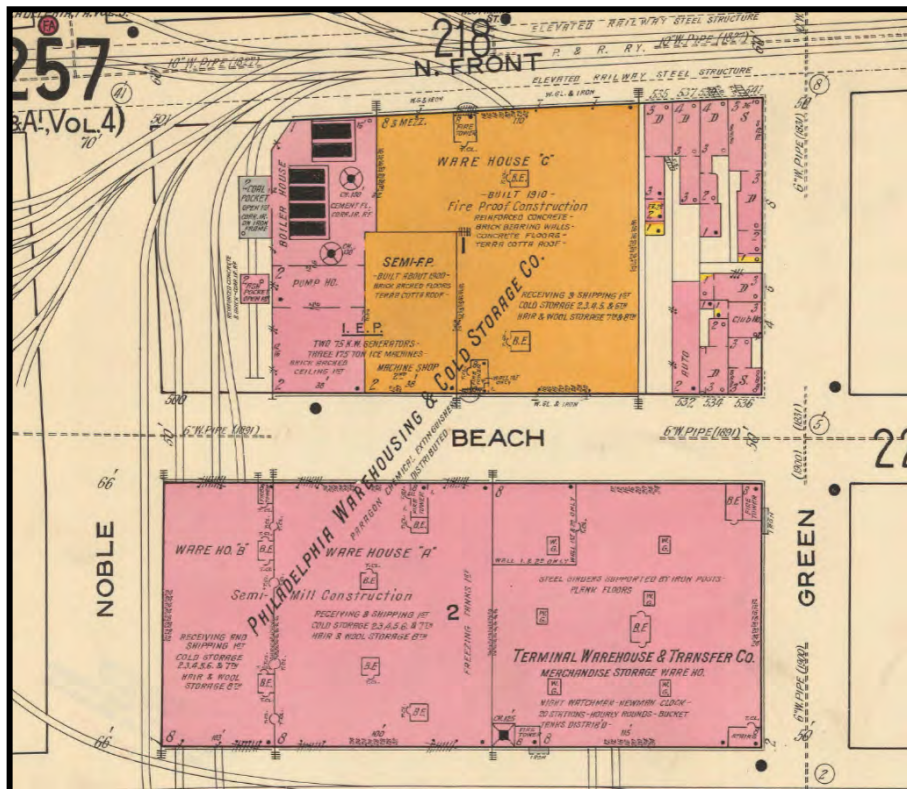


Figure 34. 1916 Sanborn showing buildings on the property and their uses. Sanborn Map Company, Philadelphia Volume 3. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1916.

In order to stay competitive, the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company implemented some of the latest technology in cold storage. In 1954, the company installed an innovative blast freeze tunnel which blasted below-zero air at 75 miles per hour and quick-froze perishable items (Figure 37).<sup>24</sup> While many of the neighboring waterfront warehouses started to disappear during the last decades of the twentieth century, the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company continued to thrive. It was around this time the family of the current company president Raymond Tarnowski assumed control of Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company and its Delaware Avenue complex. The company continued to hold shareholder meetings well into the 1980s.<sup>25</sup>

In the first years of the twenty-first century, the warehouse complex received one final alteration which solidified its place as an integral building on the Delaware waterfront. Following the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Tarnowski donated the south wall of his warehouse for a new mural to the Philadelphia Mural Arts Program. The Program hired muralist Meg Saligman to paint a draped American flag which was described as “captur[ing] the complexity of the tragedy.”<sup>26</sup> Upon completion of this mural, the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company at 500 North Columbus Boulevard once again became a familiar visual feature of not just Philadelphia but the northeastern corridor.

**Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company** *Announcing*

an exclusive new quick-freezing service to processors, distributors and producers of food, meat and poultry . . . a

## BLAST FREEZE TUNNEL

★ **BLASTS COLD AIR 60° BELOW ZERO AT 75 MILES AN HOUR**

Extreme cold is blown through the surface of the package right to its very core—and blown so quickly that the time lag existing in ordinary commercial freezing, which contributes to deterioration, is practically eliminated.

★ **ACHIEVES COMPLETE COLD PENETRATION**

Our palletized, scientifically spaced method of stacking in the tunnel permits immediate access of the tremendous flow of cold to all surfaces of every single package and product. The result is the highly desirable combination of —60° on the outer surface of the food and 0° at the center, achieved in the shortest period of time recorded commercially.

For quick-freezing these and other food items:

- Fruits and juices
- Vegetables
- Eggs
- Meats and poultry
- Fish and sea food
- Cream and milk
- Pre-cooked foods
- Canned soups

\* Quick-freezing capacity of 100,000 lbs. daily, in approximately 6,000 cu. ft. of space. Inquiries concerning the quick-freezing of food in any quantity are invited.

**PHILADELPHIA WAREHOUSING AND COLD STORAGE CO.**  
Delaware Ave., Noble, Beach and Front Sts. - Phila. 23, Pa. - Market 7-8181

Figure 35. 1954 advertisement for the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company's innovative blast freeze tunnel.  
Source: "Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage." *Philadelphia Inquirer*. October 19, 1954.

<sup>24</sup> "Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage." *Philadelphia Inquirer*. October 19, 1954.

<sup>25</sup> "Annual Meetings." *Philadelphia Inquirer*. April 16, 1984.

<sup>26</sup> Klein, Michael. "New mural to mark Sept. 11 has much help." *Philadelphia Inquirer*. September 27, 2001.



*Beck-Care Warehouse, 18-20 South Delaware Avenue, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, PA. It was built in the latter part of the 18th century on the Delaware River wharves. At the earliest record it was owned by merchant Paul Beck and was under the tenancy of E. Beck and Phillip Care (1796). The building was later the headquarters of Baugh & Sons Company, manufacturers of bone meal fertilizer since 1817. It served in this capacity from 1860-1954. Figure 36. Left: By 1967 this had become the last surviving 18th century warehouse on the Philadelphia waterfront. In that year it was demolished for the right-of-way of the Delaware Expressway. Source: Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress. Figure 37. Right: The Beck-Care Warehouses, 14-16 and 18-20 S. Delaware Avenue c1900. Source: Phillyhistory.org.*

### Criteria C and J

The Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company is a historic vignette comprised of three immense warehouse buildings; two power-related buildings; and a massive chimney stack that represent a commercial and industrial building type that once defined the historic built environment of the Delaware River waterfront in Philadelphia. While a diversity of warehouses survive throughout the larger city, the Delaware River waterfront, particularly in Delaware Avenue, and Beach, Front, and Water Streets in Fishtown, Northern Liberties, Old City, Queen Village, and Society Hill, was defined by this building type, which was an integral component of the commercial and industrial history of the Quaker City. Located immediately adjacent to waterfront, warehouses provided storage space for products, including those goods manufactured in Philadelphia, as well as others imported to the city for sale and distribution. From the eighteenth century to the time of the Second World War, the warehouse was built in varying forms and styles, and the Delaware River waterfront was the showplace of this building type.



*Figure 38. Lawrence's Sail Loft at 18-40 N. Delaware Avenue. Source: the Free Library of Philadelphia.*





Figure 39. Top right: Blight Warehouse, 101-103 South Front Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, PA. Figure 40. Top left: Latour Warehouse, 508 South Water Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, PA. Figure 41. Middle: U. S. Bonded Warehouse, 415-419 South Front Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, PA. Figure 42. Bottom: Jesse Godley Warehouse, 19-27 Queen Street, Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, PA. Source: Prints and Photographs, Library of Congress.

Designed for cold storage and the manufacture of ice, the subject property built between 1891 and 1910 epitomizes the height of warehouse architecture in the history of Philadelphia. By the 1950s, the subject property was part of a larger group of buildings that formed a largely intact

built environment of commercial and industrial architecture of the waterfront. Warehouse forms and styles of the eighteenth century were represented by buildings like the now demolished Beck-Care Warehouse at 18-20 S. Delaware Avenue (Figures 36 & 37); and the now demolished Latour Warehouse at 508 S. Water Street (Figure 40). Purported to have been built in the late eighteenth century, the Beck-Care Warehouse was much smaller in scale than the subject property, but was distinctive with its distinctive gable end of the gambrel variety facing Delaware Avenue. One of two identical warehouses that once spanned the small blocks between Degray Street and Black Horse Alley, the Beck-Care Warehouse served Baugh & Company from 1860 to 1954, when it was demolished for I-95. The LaTour Warehouse was another example from the eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries that served for many years as a small warehouse with modest, but distinctive vernacular quality. In the nineteenth century all manner of warehouses both large and small were constructed. Some of these buildings were simply for housing products, while others included both manufacturing and storage.



*Figure 43. The Quaker City Cold Storage and Warehouse Company on Delaware Avenue just below Dock Street.*

Representative of the early to mid-nineteenth century warehouse as it changed throughout the industrial age are the following buildings: Blight Warehouse at 101 S. Front Street (Figure 39); Jesse Godley Warehouse at 19-27 Queen Street (Figure 42); Lawrence's Sail Loft at 18-40 N. Delaware Avenue (Figure 38); and U.S. Bonded Warehouse at 415-419 S. Front Street (Figure 41). The Blight Warehouse at 101 S. Front Street is a large building from the second quarter of the nineteenth century that featured a store on the ground floor and warehouse space above. While this building was larger than your typical warehouse of the period of construction, it also relates to many commercial-warehouse buildings of the era beyond the waterfront. Both the Jesse Godley Warehouse at 19-27 Queen Street and the U.S. Bonded Warehouse at 415-419 S. Front Street are low-rise warehouse of the first and second quarters of the nineteenth century, typical of

bonded and other warehouse types that were built in the period. Perhaps the most distinctive warehouse of the era was Lawrence's Sail Loft at 14-18 N. Delaware Avenue. The building featured beveled corners, and a hipped roof with dormers. This building was demolished for I-95.



Figure 44. Top: Envelope advertisement for the Quaker City Cold Storage and Warehouse Co., showing the building that once stood at Delaware Avenue, Water and Spruce Streets. Figure 45. Middle: Return address on the envelop of the Quaker City Cold Storage and Warehouse Co., showing the address at the time. Source: eBay, 2019. Figure 46. Bottom: An insurance survey of 1897, showing the Quaker City Cold Storage and Warehouse Co. in its original configuration in Delaware Avenue with Spruce Street at the north and Water Street at the west. Source: Free Library of Philadelphia.



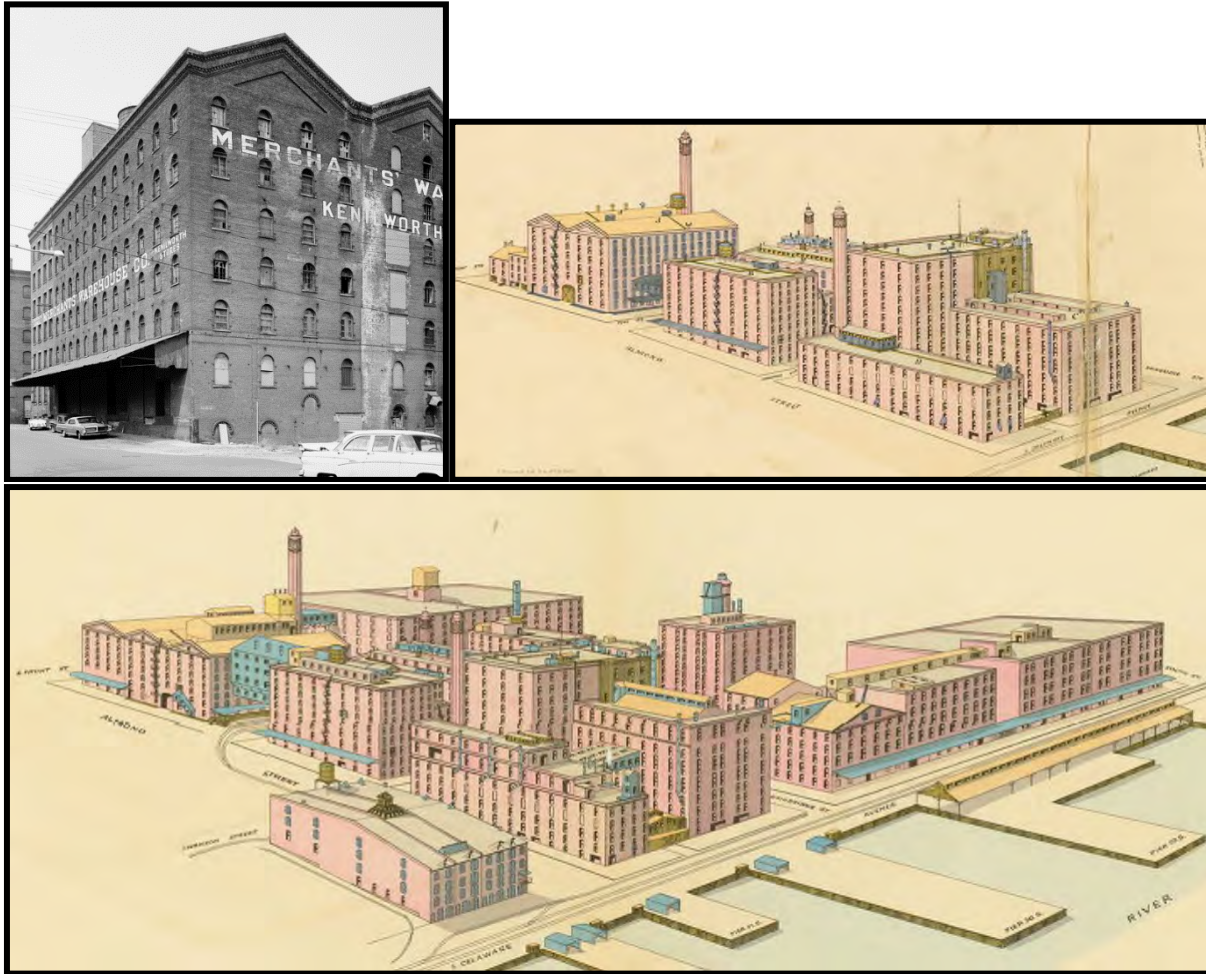


Figure 47. Top left: the former Franklin Sugar Refinery at Penn and Bainbridge Streets, last used by the Merchants Warehouse Company. Spanning several blocks to the east from Delaware Avenue, this photo was taken shortly before being for I-95 in 1967. Source: HABS. Figure 48. Top right: the Franklin Sugar refinery commercial and manufacturing buildings, including several massive warehouses. Figure 49. Bottom: the Franklin Sugar Refineries in South Philadelphia in 1898. Source: Hexamer Insurance Surveys via Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

Immense commercial and industrial complexes, comprised largely of warehouses like the subject property, were built along the Delaware River waterfront in the second half of the nineteenth century, particularly after the Civil War. Examples of this era include the Fidelity Cold Warehouse & Ice Warehouse at 50-54 S. Delaware Avenue—demolished; the Franklin Sugar Refinery in South Philadelphia—demolished (Figures 47, 48, & 49); the Pennsylvania Sugar Refinery in Fishtown—demolished; the Quaker City Cold Storage and Warehouse Company, facing both Delaware Avenue and Water Streets below Spruce—demolished (Figures 43, 44, & 45); and the earliest components of the subject property. The Pennsylvania Sugar Refining Company started in 1881 and was built to be one of the largest sugar refineries in the city over time. At least one of the buildings rival the subject property in size and scale. The entire complex was demolished in 1997. The Franklin Sugar Refinery started in just one block on the south side of Bainbridge Street, between Swanson and Penn Streets in South Philadelphia. The refinery

added numerous brick buildings—all massive in scale and size, including at least five enormous warehouses, spanning six city blocks by 1896.<sup>27</sup>

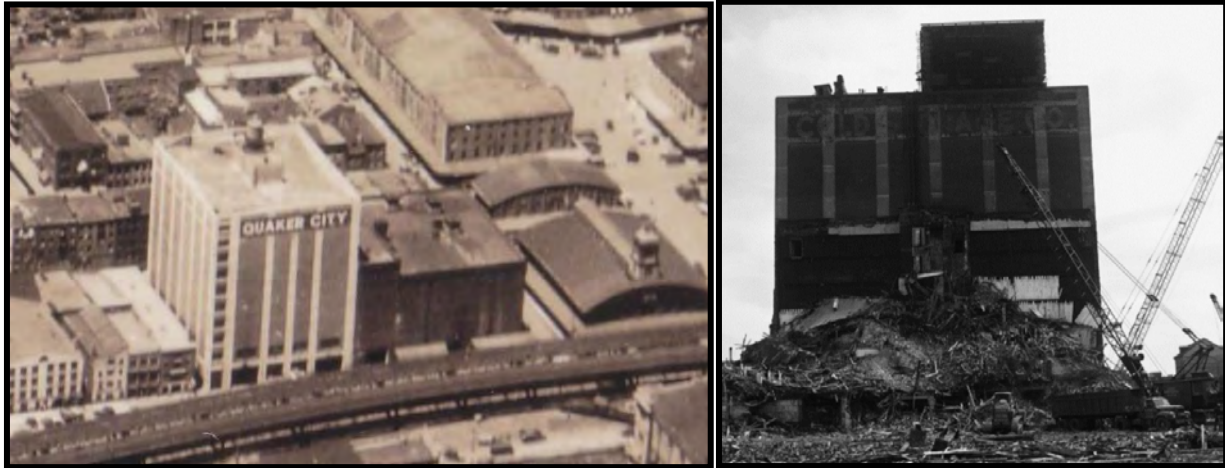


Figure 50. Left: Looking west at the Quaker City Cold Storage Company's new warehouse on left and its old warehouse on right at the Dock Street Market. Source: Dallin Aerial Survey, Hagely Digital Library. Figure 51. Right: Partially demolished Quaker City Storage Company building at Front and Spruce Streets. Source: Raymond Bodziak, Photographer, City Archives of Philadelphia.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth, purpose-built cold storage warehouses and ice manufacturing plants were built in Philadelphia. The earliest of the buildings began with large multi-story brick buildings like Warehouse A that included load-bearing masonry and a mixture of iron and wooden posts for structural columns. By the end of the nineteenth century, steel was the standard for large buildings like the subject property, including Warehouse B. And by the time Warehouse C was constructed in 1910, concrete was being used, at least in part, for construction of these large warehouses. The fourth largest warehousing company in Philadelphia by 1932, the Quaker City Cold Storage Company was a competitor of the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company, and it too employed concrete structural supports in its expansion, dramatically enlarging its capacity in the 1910-1920s to triple its storage space through the construction of a reinforced concrete building that stood ten stories adjacent to their older nineteenth century structures.<sup>28</sup> While there were a few larger companies in the business of cold storage and warehousing, the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company is a significant representative of the warehouse as a building type in Philadelphia, and specifically on the Philadelphia waterfront where so many other specimen and complexes have been lost to development, decay, urban renewal, and the construction of I-95.

<sup>27</sup> "Franklin Sugar Refinery," Hexamer General Surveys, 1896. Source: Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

<sup>28</sup> Board of Engineers for Rivers and Harbors, War Dept., *The Ports of Philadelphia, Pa., Camden, N.J., and Wilmington, Del.*, Port Series, no. 6, part 1 (Washington D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1932), 135–145.

**Some Buildings by a Master Builder**

THE BETZ BUILDING  
Broad, above Chestnut Street

THE PARK THEATRE  
Broad and Fairmount Avenue

THE TIMES ANNEX  
Eighth and Sansom Streets

THOMAS DOLAN'S RESIDENCE  
1809 Walnut Street

HENSEL, COLLADAY & CO'S  
LARGE BUILDING

WAREHOUSE BUILDING  
BATEMAN & CO.

GIRARD ESTATE BUILDINGS  
Bounded by Market, 11th, 12th  
and Girard Streets

SPRECKELS' SUGAR REFINERY  
Reed Street Wharf

TRINITY M. E. CHURCH  
Fifteenth and Mt. Vernon Streets

CORDAGE WORKS  
JOHN T. BAILEY & CO.

MARKS BROTHERS' STORE  
Eighth and Arch Streets

COLLEGE OF PHARMACY  
Tenth Street Below Race  
And Many Others

**Allen B. Rorke**  
Contractor and Builder  
Office  
308 Bourse Building, Phila.

PHILADELPHIA BOURSE BUILDING  
Fourth to Fifth Streets, above Chestnut

WESTERN SAVING FUND  
Tenth and Walnut Streets

LEEDOM'S MILLS, Bristol, Pa.

GIRARD COLLEGE BUILDINGS  
Nos. 8, 9 and 10

FITTLER'S CORDAGE WORKS  
Brideshurg, Pa.

CARPET MILLS OF  
McCALLUM & McCALLUM  
Wayne Junction, Phila.

SCHUTTE BUILDING  
12th and Thompson Streets

PHILADELPHIA WAREHOUSE  
AND COLD STORAGE CO.

OFFICE FOR THE WM. CRAMP & SONS  
SHIP AND ENGINE BUILDING CO.

CARPET MILLS OF THOMAS DOLAN

MANUFACTURERS' CLUB HOUSE

STATE FENCIBLES' ARMORY  
And many others.

**Allen B. Rorke**  
Contractor and Builder  
Office  
308 Bourse Building, Phila.

Figure 52. An advertisement for Allen B. Rorke, Contractor and Builder, in 1898. Source: *The Philadelphia Times*, 3 April 1898, 12.

### Criterion E

Warehouse A of the Philadelphia Warehousing and Cold Storage Company is the work of master builder Allen B. Rorke (1846-1899), who was a significant building contractor of “Banks, Warehouses, Mills, Churches, Dwellings, and Buildings of every description” in the City of Philadelphia and the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.<sup>29</sup> At the time of his death in 1899, *The Philadelphia Times* stated the following about Rorke:

--“if you seek my monument, look around you.”

There is no man living to-day in the United States who has a national reputation for great deeds done by him as a controlling genius in his profession who could more justly apply to himself this famous line in St. Paul’s Cathedral, London, referring to Sir Christopher Wren, its architect, than Allen B. Rorke, of Philadelphia.<sup>30</sup>

While this quote is certainly subject to late Victorian hyperbole, the full-page article about Rorke speaks to his significance as a building contractor in late nineteenth century Philadelphia. Operating from the 1870s through his death in 1899, Rorke and his firm were responsible for the

<sup>29</sup> Clinton R. Hartranft *The Official Street Directory for the City of Philadelphia*. (Philadelphia: Pickwick & Company), 1884, 1369.

<sup>30</sup> “Allen B. Rorke and His Grand Works of Genius,” *The Philadelphia Times*, 22 October 1899, 18.



construction of “Many Stately Edifices That Were Erected Under His Masterly Hand.”<sup>31</sup> Significant projects in Philadelphia include the now demolished Betz Building at the corner of S. Broad and Penn Square (Figure 53); the National Bank of Northern Liberties at 300-308 N. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street; the Philadelphia Bourse at 11-21 S. 5<sup>th</sup> Street; the U.S. Mint at 1600-1644 Spring Garden Street; and the Western Savings Fund Society at 1000-1008 Walnut Street. Perhaps the most significant of his works in the Commonwealth was the Pennsylvania State Capitol at 3<sup>rd</sup> and State Streets in Harrisburg, which was the last major project before his death.

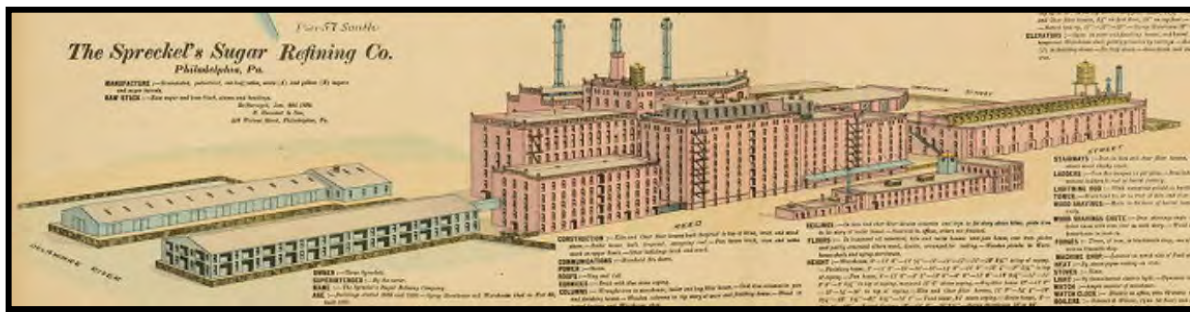


Figure 53. The Spreckel's Sugar Refining Company, Reed Street Pier, Philadelphia. Source: Hexamer Insurance Surveys via Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.

Among contracts for banks and institutional buildings, Rorke was also a well-known building contractor for factories and warehouses in the Quaker City. These projects included the now demolished Dornan Bros. & Co.'s Mills at the southwest corners of Howard and Oxford Streets; the Edwin H. Fidler & Co.'s Cordage Works at Bridesburg; the now demolished Fidelity Storage and Warehouse Co.'s Building in Market Street; the now demolished Hensel, Colladay & Company's factory at 45-47 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Street; the now demolished Justice, Bateman & Co.'s Warehouse in Gothic Street; the now demolished Mark Brother's Store and Warehouses at Eighth and Arch Streets; McCallum, Crease & Sloan Mills at Wayne Junction; the now demolished Merchant & Co.'s Stores & Warehouses at 517 Arch Street; the now demolished Spreckels' Sugar Refinery at the Reed Street Wharf (Figure 48).<sup>32</sup> No longer extant, the most notable of his industrial projects was the construction of Spreckels' Sugar Refinery at the Reed Street Wharf, an immense plant that cost no less than \$4,500,000 to be constructed. Rorke employed nearly 1,200 men to construct the plant in an area that had once been a marshland.<sup>33</sup>

While many of his commercial and industrial buildings have been demolished, Warehouse A, the Ice Machine House, and the Boiler House and Stack survives as a significant and well-known example of Rorke's work as a contractor and builder in Philadelphia.<sup>34</sup>

<sup>31</sup> “Allen B. Rorke and His Grand Works of Genius,” *The Philadelphia Times*, 22 October 1899, 18.

<sup>32</sup> *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, 4 November 1891, 703.

<sup>33</sup> “Allen B. Rorke and His Grand Works of Genius,” *The Philadelphia Times*, 22 October 1899, 18.

<sup>34</sup> Franklin M. Rorke would carry on the family business after the death of his father in 1899, changing the name of the firm to Franklin M. Rorke & Co., Builders and Contractors. The firm was also continued by Allen B. Rorke, Jr. (1873-?). The Rorkes appear to have remained in the building contracting business until roughly 1926.

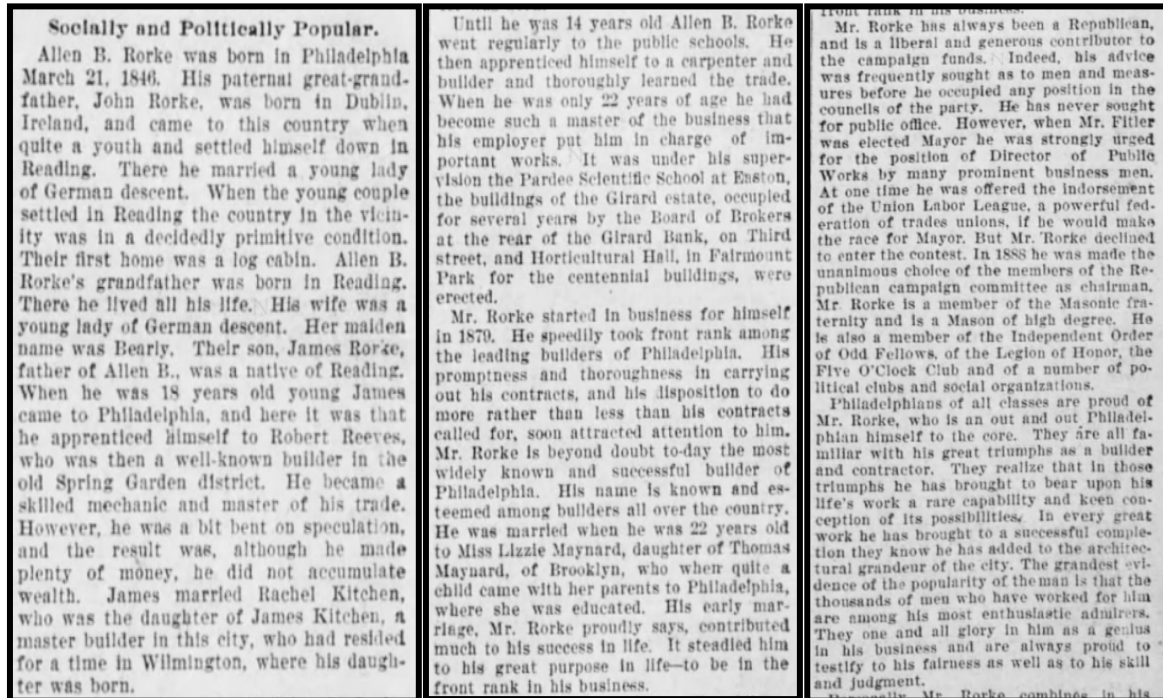


Figure 54. "Allen B. Rorke and His Grand Works of Genius," *The Philadelphia Times*, 22 October 1899, 18.

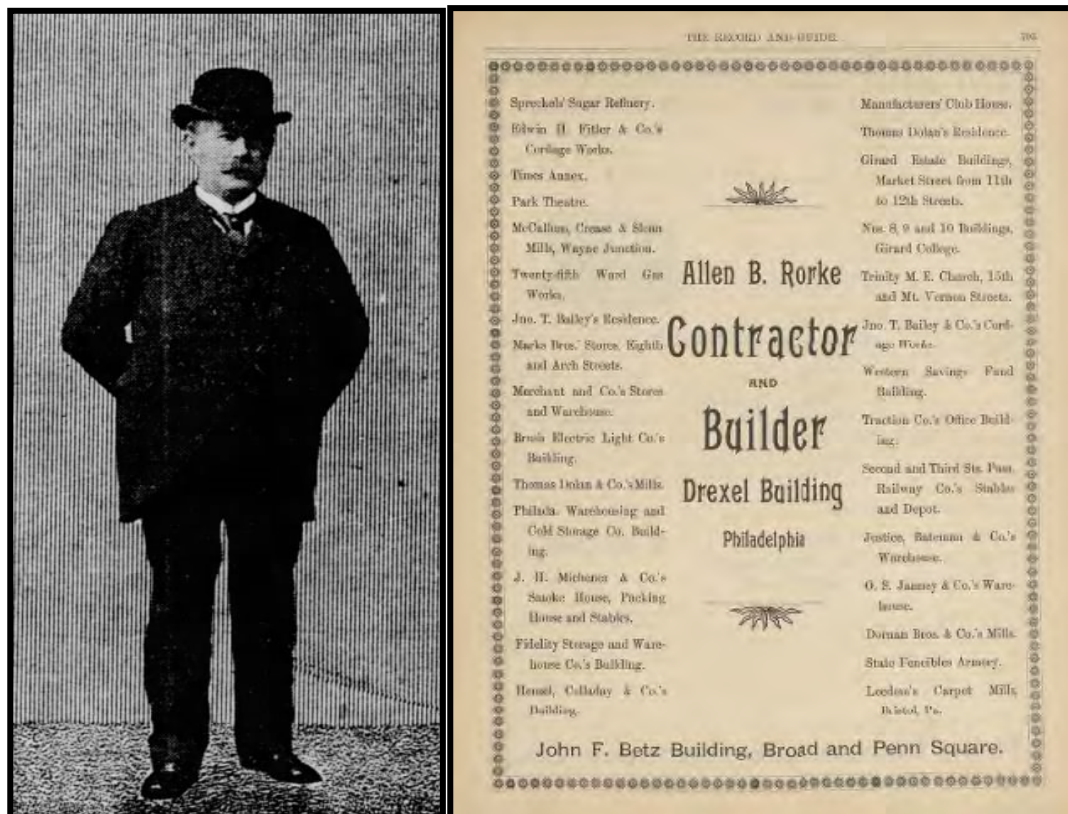


Figure 55. Left: Allen B. Rorke, Former Republican City Chairman. Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 16 December 1899, 8.  
Figure 56. Right: An advertising for Allen B. Rorke, Contractor and Builder, Drexel Building, Philadelphia, published in *The Record and Guide* in 1891. Source: *The Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* via Greater Philadelphia GeoHistory Network.





Figure 57. Top left: The Oldach Company, 45-51 N. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, constructed by Allen B. Rorke. Source: Engelhardt, George Washington, Philadelphia Pennsylvania, *The Book of Its Bourse & Co-operating Bodies*, Philadelphia, Lippincott Press, 1898-99., p. 273. Figure 58. Top right: the Betz Building at S. Broad and South Penn Square, constructed by Allen B. Rorke, in 1899 (Demolished). Source: *The Official Office Building Directory and Architectural Handbook of Philadelphia*, The Commercial Publishing and Directory Co., Philadelphia, 1899, p. 78.





Figure 59. Looking north at the south elevations of the subject property through the expanse of the former Reading Railroad Freight Yard. Source: City Archives of Philadelphia.

### Criterion H

Located in the blocks with Spring Garden Street at the north, Delaware Avenue at the east; Noble Street at the south; and Water Street at the west, the three warehouse buildings; two power-related structures, and the impressive chimney stack comprise a unique visual feature on the Delaware River Waterfront. While many buildings have been demolished along the waterfront, the blocks just south of the subject property above Willow Street comprised the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad Freight Yard, which, since the 1891, contained no buildings of any notable size and/or scale. This means that the subject property has always been a strong visual feature from the south. Additionally, since the time of its construction, the Frankford Elevated Line has been extant along North Front Street, providing a vista of the massive brick buildings and the prominent spoke stack from the west. The same view existed from the Delaware River at the east. While less prominent from the north, the buildings are still a visual feature of the waterfront. In addition to the physical buildings and the smokestack, there is historic ghost signage along the upper portion of the Warehouses A, B, and C, including the south, west, and north elevations. This signage is simple, but distinctive, reading “Philadelphia Cold Storage and Warehouse Company” on each elevation. As seen in Figures 60 and 61, this historic fabric in paint is almost secondary to artist Meg Saligman's mural "Our Flag Unfurled" (2001, then titled "Tribute to the Flag"; 2016, restored and renamed). This is one of the Mural Arts Philadelphia's most visible and iconic murals.

Lastly, while these buildings have always been a visual feature, the loss of so many old warehouse buildings along the Delaware River waterfront has made these buildings even more unique to the Philadelphia built environment.



Figure 60. Looking north towards the Philadelphia Warehousing & Cold Storage Company industrial complex from the intersection of Callowhill Street and North Christopher Columbus Boulevard. Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.



Figure 61. Looking up along the south façade of Warehouse B which prominently features Meg Saligman's mural "Our Flag Unfurled." Source: Allee Davis, June 2019.

## 8. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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