ADDRESS: 4889 UMBRIA ST
Name of Resource: Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company
Proposed Action: Designation
Property Owner: Kerd Associates with Genesis Properties and GMH Communities
Nominator: Ridge Park Civic Association
Staff Contact: Jon Farnham, jon.farnham@phila.gov

OVERVIEW: This nomination proposes to designate a portion of the property at 4889 Umbria Street in Roxborough and list it on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. Buildings associated with the former Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company stand on the site. The nomination proposes designating the older buildings along Umbria Street, the larger one-story manufacturing building and the smaller power plant, both of which were constructed in 1926 and 1927. The nomination excludes from its boundary the newer buildings along Lemonte Street and the newer beer distributorship building and vacant land along Parker Avenue. The nomination contends that the older Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company buildings are significant under Criterion J as "a representative and tangible expression of Manayunk's late industrial-era textile economy." The nomination claims that the site is significant under Criterion E for "its association with William Elmer Seibert Dyer (1880–1955), a specialized industrial architect and engineer whose work contributed to the development of Philadelphia and the larger region as a national center of textile and light manufacturing in the early twentieth century." The nomination also asserts that the complex of buildings satisfies Criterion H; "owing to its distinctive siting, scale, and industrial character, [it] represents a long-established and familiar visual feature of the Manayunk neighborhood." Toward the satisfaction of Criterion H, the nomination highlights "its terra cotta parapet signage reading 'Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company'."

Planning for the redevelopment of the site at 4889 Umbria Street has been underway for more than one year. The current plan proposes 363 residential units and 380 parking spaces. The project has been presented to Civic Design Review twice and zoning permits are ready for issuance. The redevelopment plan includes the retention of the nominated buildings. The redevelopment plans have been widely publicized in the press, and the nominator has participated in the public reviews of the plans.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: The staff recommends that the nomination demonstrates that the nominated portion of the property at 4889 Umbria Street satisfies Criterion for Designation J, but not Criterion E or H. The nomination does not present compelling evidence that W.E.S. Dyer was a designer was whose work has significantly influenced the development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or that the industrial buildings represent an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City. Beyond the satisfaction of the Criteria for Designation, the staff questions whether this is the appropriate moment to designate this property, given that it is actively under redevelopment. The developer designed a redevelopment project to comply with one set of regulations but would be compelled to redesign it midstream for new set of regulations. This nomination raises timely issues currently being debated as City Council considers amendments to the preservation ordinance.

Figure 1. Current view of the site at 4889 Umbria Street, looking northwest with Umbria Street to the left and Lemonte Street to the right.

Figure 2. A birdseye view of the proposed redevelopment of 4889 Umbria Street.

Figure 3. A rendering of the proposed redevelopment of 4889 Umbria Street.

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: 4889 Umbria St

Postal code: 19127

2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE

Historic Name: The Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company

Current/Common Name:

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: Mixed-use

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and site/plot plan of the resource's boundaries.

6. DESCRIPTION

Please attach a narrative description and photographs of the resource's physical appearance, site, setting, and surroundings.

7. SIGNIFICANCE

Please attach a narrative Statement of Significance citing the Criteria for Designation the resource satisfies.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from 1926 to 1932

Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: 1926-27

Architect, engineer, and/or designer: W.E.S. Dyer, architect and engineer

Builder, contractor, and/or artisan: C.W. Swartley & Sons

Original owner: The Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company

Other significant persons: W.E.S. Dyer, architect and engineer

CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:

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 a bibliography.

9. NOMINATOR

Organization Ridge Park Civic Association Date April 8, 2026

Name with Title Marlene Schleifer Email ridgeparkcivic@gmail.com

Street Address P.O. Box 35066 Telephone 215-482-2402

City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19128

Nominator ☐ is ☑ is not the property owner.

PHC USE ONLY

Date of Receipt: April 8, 2026

☑ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete Date: April 9, 2026

Date of Notice Issuance: April 17, 2026

Property Owner at Time of Notice:

Name: Kerd Associates, c/o Edward M. Paul & Co.

Address: 1420 Walnut Street, Suite 607

City: Philadelphia State: PA Postal Code: 19102

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: May 20, 2026

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: June 12, 2026

Date of Final Action:

☐ Designated ☐ Rejected

Nomination

for the

Philadelphia Register of Historic Places

Figure 1. The northwest and southwest elevations of the Power Plant and the Manufacturing Building. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2026.

Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company
Erected 1926-27

4889 Umbria Street
Manayunk
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Figure 2. Top: The larger parcel associated with the proposed designation is in blue. Figure 3. Bottom: The specific boundary of the proposed designation, including both the Manufacturing Building and the Power Plant. Source: City of Philadelphia, Atlas, 2025.

5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary for the subject designation is as follows:

BEGINNING at the intersection of the northeasterly side of Umbria Street (80 feet wide) and the northwesterly side of Lemonte Street (50 feet wide); Thence to the northwest along said side of Umbria Street 328 feet at the southwest elevations of the Manufacturing Building (258 feet front), an open space (15 feet wide), and the Power Plant (54 feet front) to the southeast wall of a non-contributing building to the northwest of the said Power Plant. Turning at the said point to the

northeast and extending in that direction 86 feet. Turning at the said point to the southeast and extending in that direction 328 feet to a point along the northwest side of Lemonte Street. Turning at the said point to the southwest and extending in that direction along the northwesterly side of the said Lemonte Street to the point and place of beginning.

Tax Parcel No.: 884629910
Deed Registry: No.: 094N020006

Figure 4. The southwest and southeast elevations. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2026.

6. Physical Description

The former Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company at 4889 Umbria Street is an industrial complex that includes a large one-story Manufacturing Building and a small Power Plant, both of which were constructed in 1926-27. The Manufacturing Building is rectangular in plan and extends longitudinally along the street near the Schuylkill River, presenting a long, horizontal massing characteristic of early-twentieth-century light-industrial and manufacturing buildings. Its scale—approximately 14,000 square feet—reflects the continued importance of textile-related production in Manayunk during the early twentieth century, when plush and upholstery manufacturing formed a significant component of the local industrial economy. The Power Plant is immediately adjacent to the northwest along Umbria Street.

Manufacturing Building

The Manufacturing Building of the former Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company is constructed of red brick laid in a regular running bond above a rusticated concrete foundation that responds to the sharply graded topography of the site. The foundation is expressed as a tall base along the primary elevation, accommodating the slope of Umbria Street and creating a raised principal floor level. The brick walls are articulated by a rhythmic series of segmental-arched window openings, set within shallow recessed panels that provide a subtle vertical cadence across the otherwise planar façade. These evenly spaced openings, originally fitted with industrial sashes, admit ample natural light to the interior manufacturing floor, a defining functional requirement of early-twentieth-century factory design.

The roof is flat, with a modest parapet that conceals the roofline and reinforces the building's rectilinear, utilitarian profile. The structure originally terminated in stepped gable ends at its narrow elevations, which supported a central monitor now removed. The surviving parapet is minimally ornamented, consistent with the restrained industrial aesthetic of the period, though slight variations in height and shallow pilaster-like projections provide subtle articulation at the corners and along the elevations. Entrances and loading points are utilitarian in character,

historically placed along secondary elevations and at grade transitions to facilitate the efficient movement of goods and materials.

The main, southwest elevation spans twenty-one large bays along Umbria Street. The fenestration is centered on an expanse of five bays that are delineated by a parapet above that is formed by brick corbelling. The parapet reads: “Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company,” a custom terracotta sign that is built into the masonry wall. The window openings are delineated by segmental arched tops formed by soldier coursing.

Figure 5. Top: The central bays of the southwest elevation, showing distinctive signage. Figure 6. Bottom: The southwest elevation along Umbria Street. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2026.

Overall, the building exemplifies a transitional industrial type in Manayunk: moving away from the earlier multi-story mill structures of the nineteenth century toward a broader, single-story manufacturing form that emphasized efficiency, daylighting, and horizontal production flow. Its simple brick construction, repetitive fenestration, and pronounced base collectively convey both its industrial function and its adaptation to the steep terrain that defines the Manayunk landscape.

Figure 7. Top: The southeast and northeast elevations. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2026. Figure 8. Bottom: The northeast elevation. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2025.



Figure 9. Left: The southwest elevation of the Power Plant. Figure 10. Right: The southwest and southeast elevations of the Power Plant. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2026.

Power Plant

The Power Plant of the Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company is a small, ancillary brick industrial building situated immediately to the northwest of the Manufacturing Building at 4889 Umbria Street. One to two stories in height, the structure is rectangular in form and constructed of red brick laid in a common bond, resting on a low foundation. Its modest scale and utilitarian design clearly distinguish it from the larger Manufacturing Building while reflecting its specialized support function within the complex. The structure originally included a tall chimney stack that appears to have been demolished after 2011. The subject building is a restrained, yet expressive utilitarian façade rendered in red brick, incorporating subtle Art Deco influences within an otherwise functional industrial design. The four bay façade includes two two-story bays at the northwest and two one-story bays at the southeast. The window openings are flat-headed and rectangular in form, featuring corbeled lintels that emulate a repeated Ziggurat motif. These apertures retain original multi-light steel industrial sash windows. The ground floor of the two-story section features a vehicle bay with a modern replacement door. The side elevations are largely out of public view, but also feature corbeled architectural details and large windows.

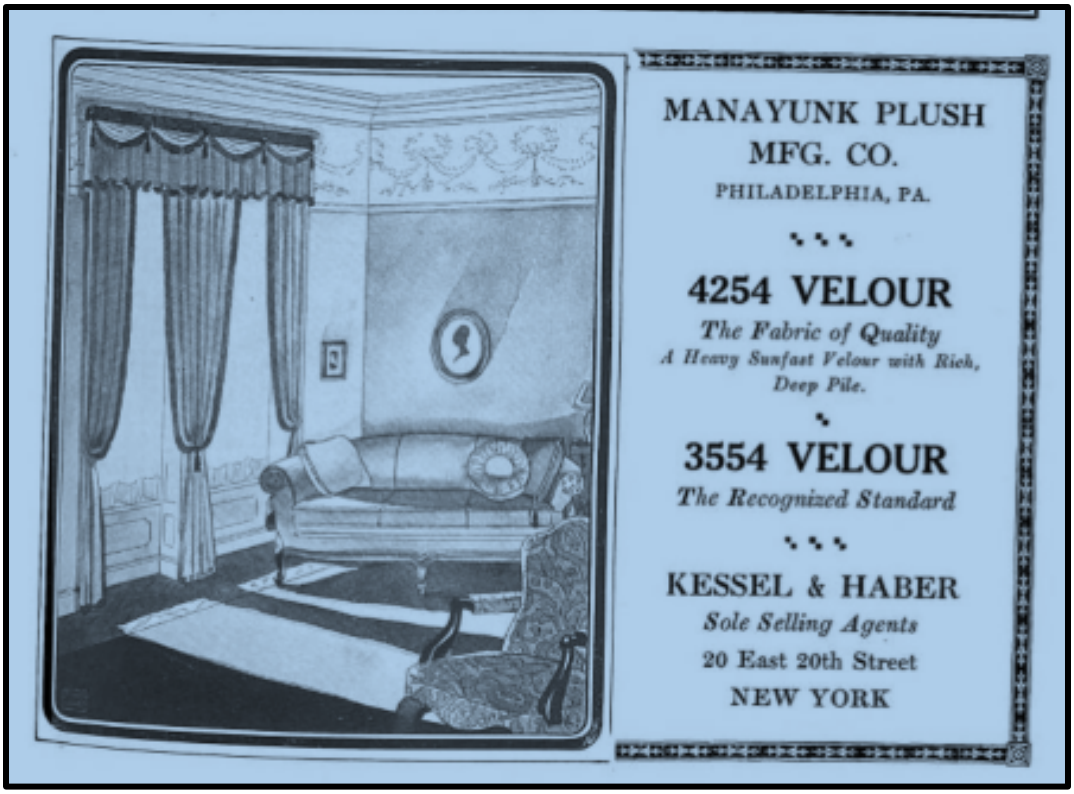

Figure 11. An advertisement in the Southern Furniture Journal for the Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company in 1928. Source: *Southern Furniture Journal*, February 1928, 119.

7. Statement of Significance

The Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company at 4889 Umbria Street in the Manayunk neighborhood of Philadelphia is a significant historic resource that merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission and inclusion on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. The subject building satisfies the following Criteria for Designation, as enumerated in Section 14–1004 of the Philadelphia Code:

(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 to the time of design and construction in 1926-27 through the occupancy of the Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company in 1932.

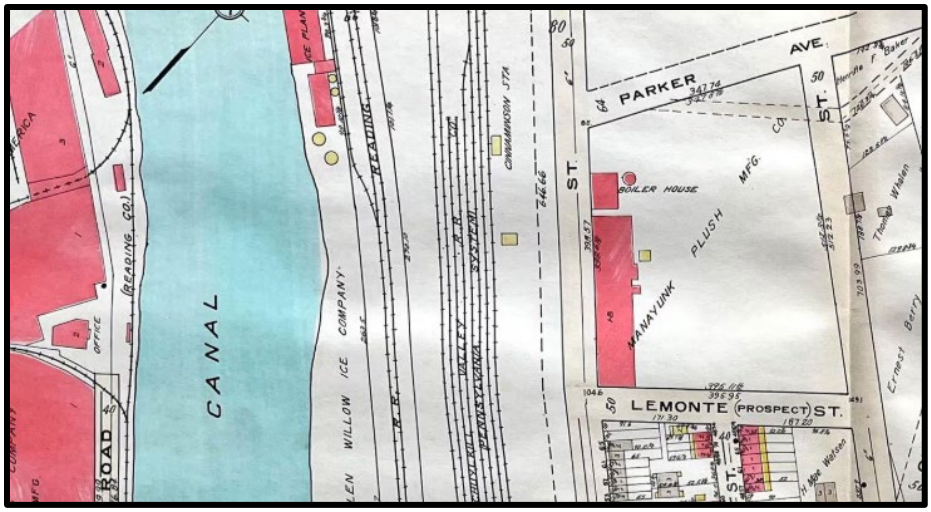

Figure 12. The Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company is shown on this map as it stands today in 1929. Source: Atlas of the 21st Ward of the City of Philadelphia (1929).

Criterion J

The Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company at 4889 Umbria Street, constructed in 1926-27, is significant under Criterion J as a representative and tangible expression of Manayunk's late industrial-era textile economy. The building embodies the cultural, economic, and social heritage of the community during a period when Manayunk—long defined by its nineteenth-century mills—was transitioning into a modernized manufacturing district of specialized textile producers operating in purpose-built facilities. This is represented by the 1926-27 Manufacturing Building and Power Plant, which was designed for the specific purposes of plush production in the interwar years, representing the economic and social history of the community.

Founded on February 26, 1918, with a capital of $25,000, the Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company was organized by Charles W. Horrocks, C. Morris Swartley, Clayton R. Struse, and John S. Turner for "manufacturing, buying, selling, and dealing in plushes, velvets, velours, and textile and kindred fabrics of all kinds."[1] From its inception, the company participated in Manayunk's long-established textile tradition, producing specialty fabrics used in upholstery and furnishings for a national market. Initially operating from a four-story brick mill at 108–110 Levering Street, the firm represented the continuation of the district's dense, vertically oriented mill buildings that had characterized the Schuylkill River corridor since the nineteenth century.[2] By 1920, John S. Turner had risen to the role of manager, and later secretary and general manager, and the factory was operating with approximately fifteen looms, indicating a modest but stable manufacturing concern.[3]

The construction of the new factory building at 4889 Umbria Street marked a significant evolution in both the company's operations and the industrial development of Manayunk. Designed by W. E. S. Dyer and erected in 1926–27, the building was designed as a one-story, brick, reinforced concrete, and steel industrial structure featuring a monitor-type roof, expansive floor plate, and modern amenities including cement floors, hollow metal sash and doors, and integrated safety

[1] *Charters of Corporations*, Pennsylvania, 1918. Source: Google Books.
[2] *Charters of Corporations*, Pennsylvania, 1918. Source: Google Books.
[3] "John S. Turner Funeral Monday," *Bridgeton Evening News*, 17 January 1942; see also 20 December 1920 issue.

features.[4] Unlike the earlier multi-story mill at Levering Street, the Umbria Street plant reflected a new industrial model: horizontally organized, efficiently planned, and designed for improved lighting, ventilation, and workflow. This shift was emblematic of broader changes in American manufacturing during the early twentieth century, as firms adapted to new technologies, electrification, and evolving production methods.[5]

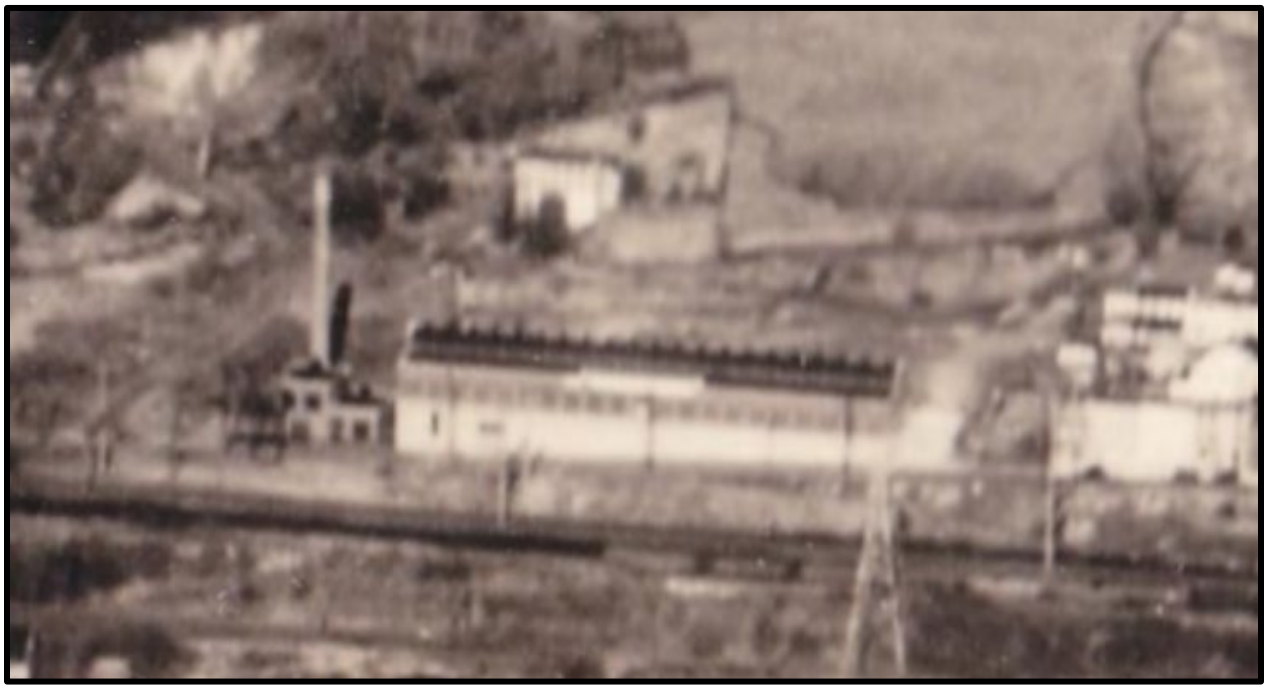

Figure 13. A View of the subject property in 1937. Source: Dallin Aerial Surveys, Hagley Digital Collections.

The decision to construct this modern facility—initially envisioned as part of a larger $300,000 expansion plan along Cinnaminson Lane—demonstrates the company's ambition and optimism during the post–World War I industrial boom. Though ultimately realized at a more modest cost (reported at approximately $70,000), the Umbria Street development, which included a "new mill building and power house," nonetheless represented a substantial investment and a physical manifestation of the firm's growth.[6] Other reports referred to a "new dying house, finishing house, and power house."[7] "$300,000 Manayunk Plan Is Proposed," reported in *The Philadelphia Inquirer* on May 9, 1926.[8] The Manufacturing Building and Power Plant was designed by W.E.S. Dyer, a self-described "Mill Engineer and Architect," specializing in "Industrial Buildings, Textile Mills, Factories, Power Plants, [and] Special Processes and Devices."[9] The building's construction by C. W. Swartley & Sons, one of the company's incorporators, further underscores the integrated and locally rooted nature of Manayunk's industrial enterprises. [10] Plans to erect the building were published in trade journals of the day, including *Iron Trade Review, The Manufacturer's News, The*

[4] "John S. Turner Funeral Monday," *Bridgeton Evening News*, 17 Jan. 1942; see also 20 Dec. 1920 issue.; and *Philadelphia Builders Guide and Real Estate Record*, 12 May 1926.
[5] *Philadelphia Builders Guide and Real Estate Record*, 12 May 1926.
[6] *The Textile World*, 5 February 1927, 429.
[7] "New Plant Construction," *Power*, 8 June 1926.
[8] "$300,000 Manayunk Plan Is Proposed," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 9 May 1926.
[9] The letterhead of W.E.S. Dyer, "Mill Engineer and Architect," who designed the subject property. Source: Ebay.
[10] *Philadelphia Builders Guide and Real Estate Record*, 2 June 1926.

Iron Trade and Western Machinist, etc.[11] In that period, the competition of Manayunk's plush industry included: A.T. Baker; Bennet & Aspden; Collins & Aikman; Fred Pearson & Co.; James Dobson & Co.; and Kaufman Plush Co.[12] The Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company is just one of these firms and its industrial complex represents a period of Manayunk's textile manufacturing history.

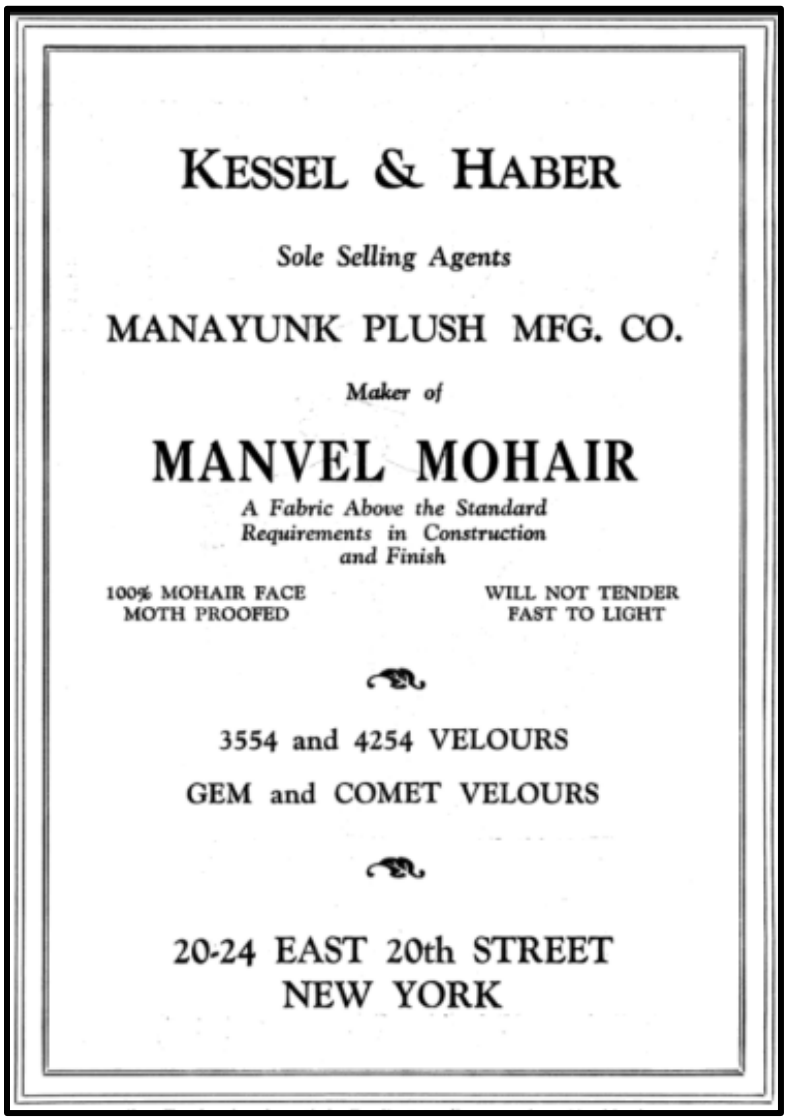

Figure 14. Advertisement for the wares of the Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company in 1930. Source: *The Decorative Furnisher,* November 1930.

[11] *Iron Trade Journal*, 24 June 1926.; *The Manufacturers' News*, 19 June 1926.; and *The Iron Trade and Western Machinist*, June 1926.
[12] *Upholsterers Journal*, May 1927.

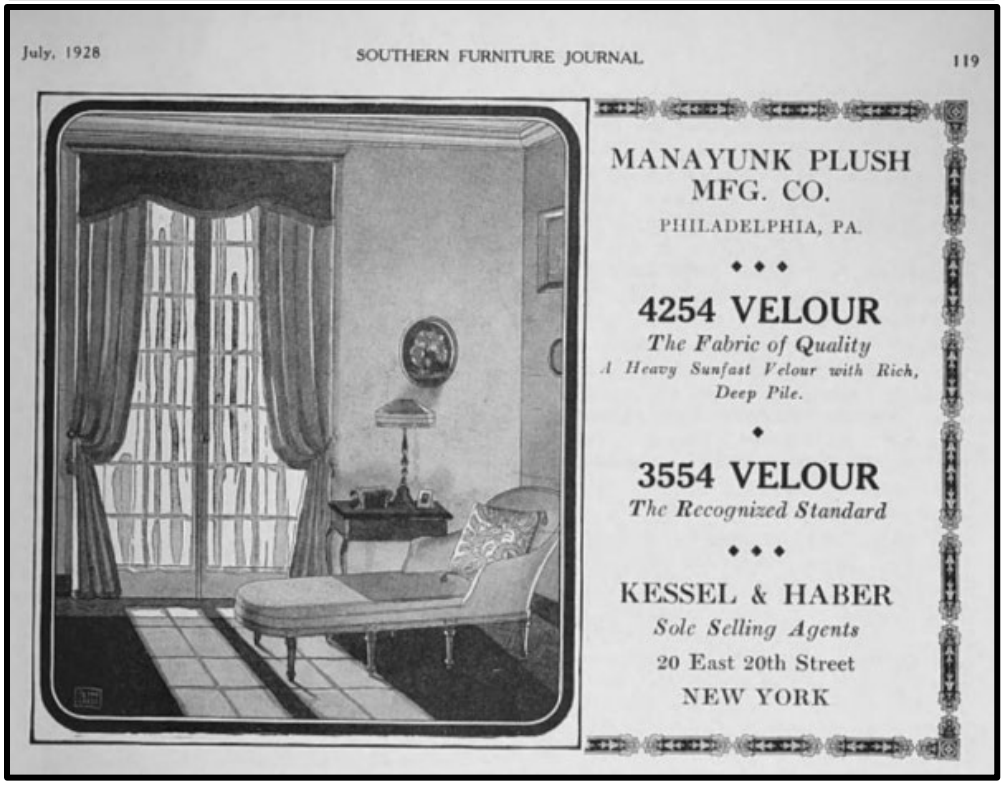

Figure 15. Top: An advertisement for velour made by the Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company in 1928. Source: *Southern Furniture Journal*, September 1928. Figure 16. Bottom: An advertisement for velour made by the Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company in 1928. Source: *Southern Furniture Journal*, July 1928.

Within the broader context of the neighborhood, the 4889 Umbria Street facility illustrates the final phase of Manayunk's textile dominance, when specialized manufacturers continued to operate even as longtime concerns declined or relocated. The company's production of materials such as

"Manvel Mohair" and velours, marketed through Kessel & Haber, situates it within national consumer markets while remaining firmly embedded in the local industrial landscape.[13] This is illustrated through the placement of advertisements for products in principal publications for decorating, fabric, and furniture. The factory thus represents not only a place of production but also a modern improvement in the economic and social networks that sustained Manayunk's working and middle-class populations.

The building's history is equally significant for what it reveals about the vulnerability of such enterprises during periods of economic upheaval. In April 1932, amid the effects of the Great Depression, the property was listed in a Trustee's Sale in Bankruptcy, marking the end of the Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company.[14] The sale described the facility as a one-story brick factory building with a monitor roof and approximately 14,000 square feet of floor space, underscoring its scale and purpose-built character. This moment reflects the broader decline of Philadelphia's textile industry in the interwar years, as economic pressures, shifting markets, and regional competition led to the closure of many smaller firms.[15]

Figure 17. An advertisement for an auction of the subject building by Freeman's in 1932. Source: *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 April 1932.

As a result, the Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company at 4889 Umbria Street stands as a significant representative of the economic, social, and industrial heritage of Manayunk. It embodies the neighborhood's transition from a nineteenth-century mill village to a modern industrial community, the persistence of specialized textile production into the twentieth century, and the eventual contraction of that industry during the Great Depression. Through its association with local entrepreneurs, evolving manufacturing practices, and broader economic trends, the building exemplifies the historical development and identity of Manayunk and satisfies Criterion J of the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places.

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[13] *Furniture Age*, July 1928.
[14] "Trustee's Sale in Bankruptcy," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 30 April 1932.
[15] "Trustee's Sale in Bankruptcy," *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 30 April 1932.; and *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, 24 April 1932.

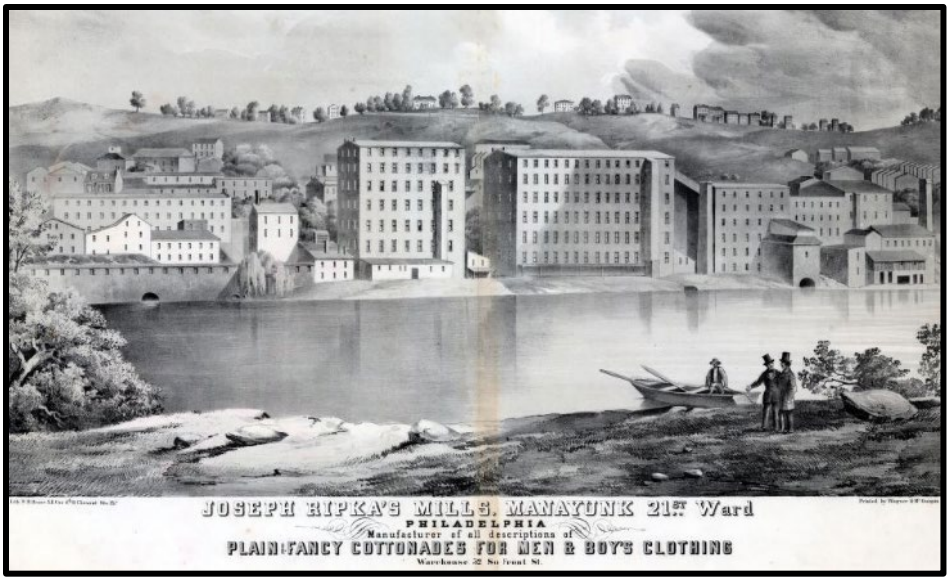

Figure 18. An illustration that depicts an early textile mill complex of Manayunk in the mid-nineteenth century. Source: Library of Congress.

Historic Context: Textile and Plush Manufacturing in Manayunk and Philadelphia

The development of Manayunk as one of the most significant textile manufacturing centers in the region is rooted in the early nineteenth century, when the harnessing of the Schuylkill River through the construction of the Schuylkill Navigation system enabled large-scale industrial production. Although textile manufacture had existed in Philadelphia prior to the War of Independence, it was not until 1819 that the first mill was established in Manayunk, inaugurating a period of rapid industrialization. Early entrepreneurs such as Captain John Towers recognized the advantages of water power and transportation access, establishing mills that initially produced woolen goods and later diversified into a wide array of textile products.[16] By the mid-nineteenth century, Manayunk had evolved into a dense industrial corridor, characterized by multi-story mill buildings lining the canal and riverbanks, supported by ancillary infrastructure including warehouses and worker housing.[17]

Over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Manayunk's textile industry underwent successive phases of specialization, reflecting broader trends in American industrial production. Initially focused on wool and linen, manufacturers increasingly turned to cotton and blended fabrics, including carpet yarns, worsteds, and knit goods.[18] By the late nineteenth century, Manayunk had become particularly associated with the production of cotton plush and related materials, emerging as a national center of this specialized industry. Contemporary trade literature described Manayunk as "the centre of the cotton plush industry of the United States," as well as a leading hub for "wiping waste" and other secondary textile products derived from cotton processing. This specialization was supported by an integrated network of mills, machine shops, and finishing operations, as well as access to global raw material supply chains, including cotton

[16] Horace H. Platt. "Manayunk," *The Textile Digest*, February 1921, 5.
[17] Philip Scranton. *Proprietary Capitalism: The Textile Manufacture at Philadelphia, 1800-1885.* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), 251-52, 307.
[18] Edwin Freedley. *Philadelphia and Its Manufacturers.* (2009), 261.

from Egypt and the American South and wool from regions as distant as South America, Russia, and South Africa.[19]

The plush industry, in particular, represented a highly specialized and technologically sophisticated branch of textile manufacture. Plush fabrics—characterized by their dense, cut pile surface—were used in a wide variety of applications, including upholstery, draperies, clothing, and industrial materials. Their production required advanced weaving techniques and specialized machinery, often developed or refined locally. Firms in Manayunk contributed to innovations in textile machinery and processes, reinforcing the area's reputation as both a manufacturing and technological center. The presence of companies such as the Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company illustrates the consolidation of this specialization interwar years, when corporate organization and capital investment facilitated the expansion of production capacity and market reach.

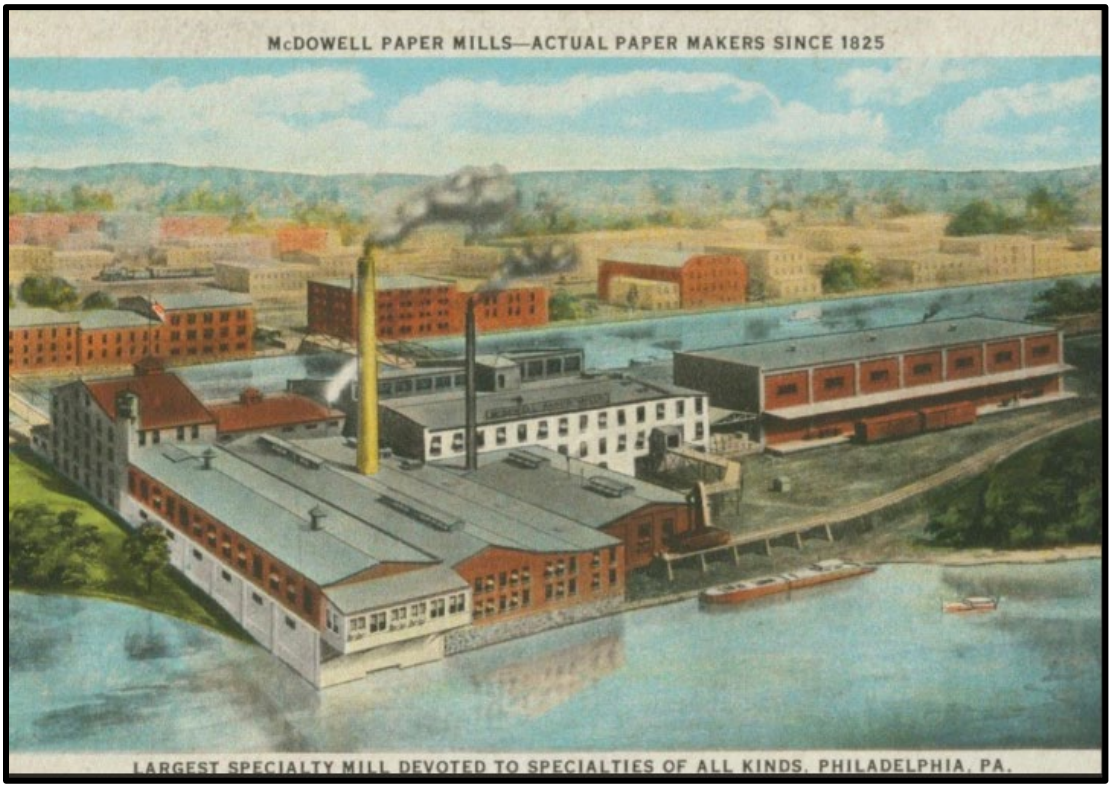

Figure 19. The McDowell Paper Mills in 1925, a plant with modern one- and two-story buildings for specialized uses. Source: Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Philadelphia more broadly functioned as one of the nation's preeminent textile centers during this period, with Manayunk forming a critical component within a larger regional industrial system that included Kensington, Germantown, and Frankford. While Kensington became synonymous with carpet weaving and hosiery, Manayunk distinguished itself through its concentration of integrated mill complexes and its emphasis on specialized cotton goods, particularly plush. The city's textile economy was supported by a robust labor force, access to rail and port infrastructure, and a network of financial and commercial institutions that facilitated both domestic distribution

[19] Horace H. Platt. "Manayunk," *The Textile Digest*, February 1921, 5.

and international trade. By the early twentieth century, textile production in Manayunk alone generated millions of dollars annually and supported thousands of workers, underscoring its central role in Philadelphia's industrial economy.

Despite fluctuations caused by economic cycles, labor disputes, and shifting markets, Manayunk's textile industry remained a defining feature of the community well into the twentieth century. The persistence of firms engaged in plush manufacturing and related textile production reflects both the adaptability of local industry and the enduring importance of this specialized sector. Within this context, the Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company represents a significant component of the neighborhood's industrial heritage, embodying the technological, economic, and spatial characteristics that defined Manayunk as a center of textile innovation and production in Philadelphia.

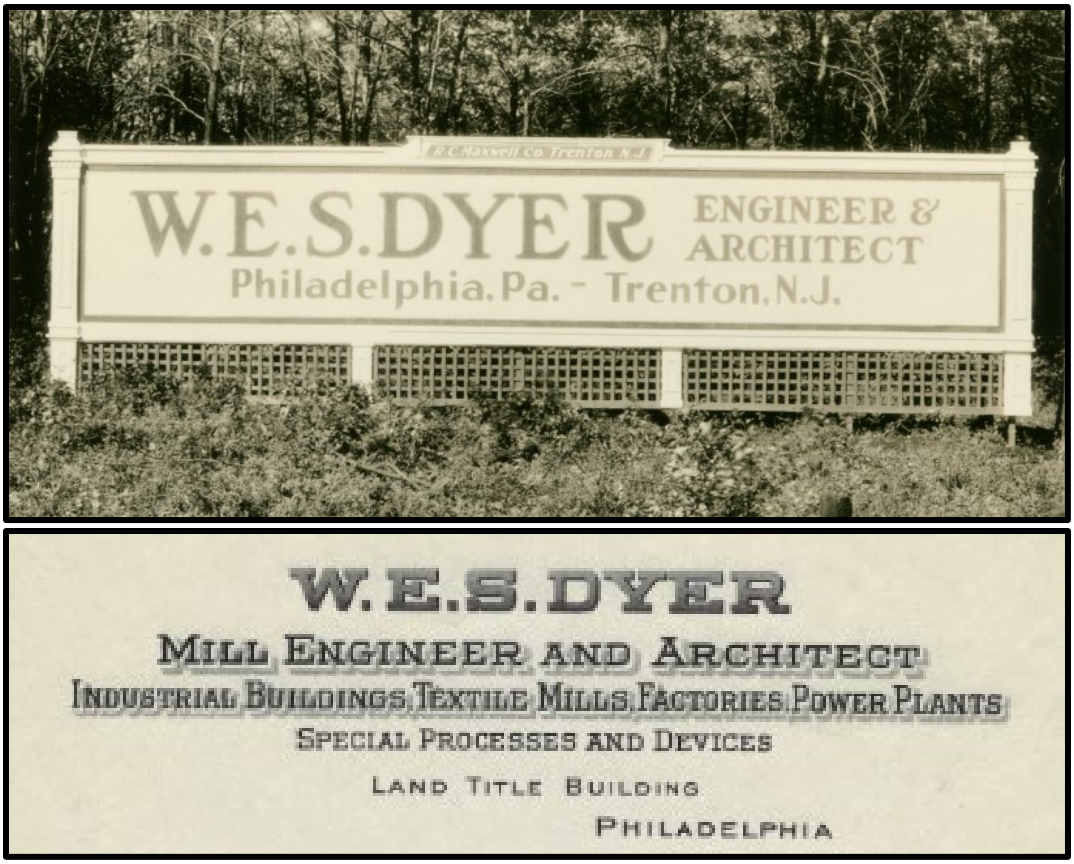

Figure 20. Top: An advertisement for W. E. S. Dyer, Engineer and Architect, of the subject building, on a billboard, which was completed by the R. C. Maxwel Co. of Trenton, New Jersey. Source: R.C. Maxwell Company Records, Duke University. Figure 21. Bottom: The letterhead of W.E.S. Dyer, "Mill Engineer and Architect," who designed the subject property. Source: Ebay.

Criterion E

The Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company at 4889 Umbria Street is significant under Criterion E for its association with William Elmer Seibert Dyer (1880–1955), a specialized industrial architect and engineer whose work contributed to the development of Philadelphia and the larger region as a national center of textile and light manufacturing in the early twentieth century. Dyer's career reflects the increasing professionalization and technical sophistication of industrial design during this period, particularly in the planning of textile mills, factories, and associated power infrastructure.

Trained and active as both a mechanical engineer and architect, Dyer emerged by the 1910s as a practitioner focused almost exclusively on industrial buildings, advertising himself as a "Registered Professional Engineer" specializing in "Industrial Buildings, Textile Mills, Factories, Power Plants, [and] Special Processes and Devices." Operating from offices in the Land Title Building in Philadelphia, Dyer's work illustrates the integration of engineering and architectural expertise required to design modern manufacturing facilities during a period of rapid technological advancement in production methods. His known body of work—documented through trade publications and contract records—includes numerous factories, knitting mills, dye works, boiler houses, and power plants across Philadelphia and the surrounding region, demonstrating both the breadth and consistency of his industrial practice.

Figure 22. Left: An advertisement that illustrates the design work of Dyer in 1925. Source: *American Forests*, May 1925. *Figure 23.* Right: An advertisement for Dyer's work using Barreled Sunlight in 1925. Source: *Factory, the Magazine of Management,* November 1925.

By the 1920s, Dyer's practice had become a well-oiled machine, producing important factory complexes based on its highly specialized architectural and engineering plans for specific industrial purposes. In the years preceding his work on the subject building, Dyer designed the Pottery Works of Thomas Maddock's Sons Company in Trenton, New Jersey, a large, $1,000,000 industrial complex of largely one- and two-story structures. The *American Architect* stated the following about Dyer's services:

> An outstanding feature of this whole project is found in that the architect and engineer, W.E.S. Dyer, was retained at its first inception. Mr. Dyer surveyed all of the conditions surrounding the industry and selected the site for the owners. His organization made all of the surveys and designed and supervised the erection of every part of the plant. This involved service that could foresee the probable future needs of the owners with the related elements of natural advantages of the site, railroad connections, transportation for employees, source of water supply, sewage disposal and other factors that pertain to the planning of large industrial projects, works usually allotted to the civil engineer. The work of this strictly architectural character consisted of housing in the best manner the machinery, special equipment and the workmen and providing ample, well lighted and heated space for the fabrication, movement and storage of the necessary materials and products. The work of an engineering nature included the steam and electrical power plant, the producer gas plant, the construction of the Bisque and Gloss Kilns, the apparatus in the casting shop, the dipping shop and the warehouse and shipping departments.

> The heating, ventilating and air conditioning apparatus were designed to produce certain predetermined conditions involving organization ability of the finest type. The awarding of the contracts, the purchase of machinery and equipment and the construction installation of all these parts were conducted by the architect's organization. In fact, this is a fine example of a complete architectural service such as all architects should have the opportunity to render, and which ensures those results that satisfy every reasonable requirement.[20]

This type of precision in the design and construction of industrial complexes became a defining service of W.E.S. Dyer. The firm's design for the Bellevue Worsted Mills in Philadelphia required "timber construction" due to the "vibrating load," indicative of "textile mills, shoe factories, silk mills, etc."[21] Another important commission was a "new…home" for "KAPOCK" draperies at Twenty-third Street and Allegheny Avenue for A. Theo. Abbott & Co. in 1922.[22] The firm designed "a new grinding mill" for Golding Sons Co. in Trenton, New Jersey in 1927; the Sunbury Converting Works in Sunbury, Pennsylvania, in ca.1927-28; and a $1,000,000 wire products manufacturing plant in 1930.[23] Its work also included the "largest high pressure plant" in the country for the Philip Carey Manufacturing Company at Cincinnati, Ohio, in 1928.[24]

From water power to steam power to electricity, "the requirements and configurations of steam engine houses, or powerhouses, changed little over the years."[25] For an engineer like Dyer, the trick was to design power infrastructure to suit the needs of specific industrial requirements of evolving technologies. Dyer's firm made a specialty of power plants and related devices, including a "new power plant" for the Enterprise Furniture Company in Glen Rock, Pennsylvania in 1921; a "new one-story power house" for W.H. and E.A. Margerison & Co. in 1921; a power house for Fred Pearson & Company, Inc., a prominent plush manufacturer in Manayunk, in 1923; and a $350,000 power plant for the Skenandora Rayon Corporation at Utica, New York in 1929.[26]

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[20] "The Modern Pottery Works of Thomas Maddock's Sons Company," *The American Architect*, July 1925.
[21] *American Forests*, May 1925.
[22] "New "KAPOCK" Home," *The Upholsterer and Interior Decorator*, 15 June 1922.
[23] *Industrial and Engineering Chemistry,* 20 April 1927.; *Textile Work*, 14 July 1928.; and *The Iron Trade Review,* 5 Jun e 1930.
[24] *Pit and Quarry,* 7 November 1928.
[25] Betsy Hunter Bradley. *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States.* (New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 49-50.
[26] *Combustion*, September 1921, 221.; *The Iron Age*, 21 July 1921, 181.; *Electrical World*, 28 June 1923, 211.; and *Power Plant Engineering*, 15 April 1929.

Figure 24. An advertisement card for W.E.S. Dyer, Mill Engineer and Architect, showing on of his successful commissions. Source: Athenaeum of Philadelphia.

Within this context, Dyer's design for the Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company represents a significant example of his specialized work in textile mill architecture. Commissioned in 1926, the building reflects the continued importance of Manayunk as a center of textile production, even as the industry evolved into more specialized forms such as plush and synthetic fabric manufacturing. Dyer's involvement situates the property within a broader network of early twentieth-century industrial development, linking it to contemporaneous projects including knitting mills in North Philadelphia, dye works facilities, and hosiery and textile plants throughout the city. Dyer also specialized in power plants, which was an important aspect of the subject property's significance when it was initially employed by the Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company.

Figure 25. Top left: The Frankford Grocery Co. Inc.'s warehouse in the Frankford section of Philadelphia had similar signage that speaks to the period of construction, as well as the designer. Source: Promo Power Group. Figure 26. Top right: An illustration of a factory designed by Dyer. Source: Ebay. Figure 27. Bottom: A section view of Thomas Maddock's Sons Co. in Trenton, New Jersey, designed by Dyer. Source: "The Modern Pottery Works of Thomas Maddock's Sons Company," *The American Architect,* July 1925.

Dyer's significance lies not only in the number of commissions he undertook, but in his role as a designer of highly functional, purpose-built industrial environments tailored to specific manufacturing processes. His dual training enabled him to address structural systems, power generation, ventilation, and workflow efficiency in a unified manner, embodying the shift toward scientifically managed industrial architecture. The Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company exemplifies this approach, representing the type of specialized facility that supported Philadelphia's dominance in textile production during the early twentieth century and the interwar years.

Accordingly, the property at 4889 Umbria Street is significant as the work of W. E. S. Dyer, an important regional figure in industrial architecture and engineering, whose designs contributed to the physical and economic landscape of manufacturing in the Philadelphia region.

➡Before you build a Factory or Warehouse-see Weyerhaeuser⬅

INTERIOR OF MODERN TEXTILE MILL—"SEMI-MILL CONSTRUCTION"—*W. E. S. Dyer, Architect and Engineer*

Bringing Back Sane Economics into Industry

A message to Business Men about Weyerhaeuser-Ideal Industrial Construction

MANUFACTURING progress moves swiftly in this country. It would be hard to find any factory today where plant, equipment or major methods bear much resemblance to those in use twenty-five years ago.

In the main, progress has probably made for higher production and lower costs.

Yet there is hardly a manufacturer of today who does not find his overhead costing him way beyond his reasonable hopes for economy.

NO type of factory building has ever been found so economical, dollar for dollar, as the "Mill Construction" which was the standard of American industry up-to 1900.

This type of building grew out of the needs of the thrifty, frugal era of industry.

By the use of "Mill Construction," it is quite possible to save up to 15% on capital building cost.

Save up to 15% on interest charges, with a corresponding saving in taxes.

Save up to 75% on insurance charges.

In one section of this country there are hundreds of great factories built of "Mill Construction," and protected by sprinkler system against inside fires, in which the losses from fire over a recent 3-year period have averaged only 3¼ cents per $100 of insurance written.

LEST there be any misunderstanding, let us say right here that Weyerhaeuser did not originate "Mill Construction."

Nor would Weyerhaeuser be understood as urging the indiscriminate use of "Mill Construction."

In fact, one of the functions of the Weyerhaeuser Expert Construction Engineer is to advise against the use of "Mill Construction" when it is not suited to the purpose of the building.

As part of its program of service to American industry, Weyerhaeuser has made the most authoritative study of this type of building in recent years—and perhaps ever.

Capital investment—taxes—interest charges—depreciation—design—structural efficiency—flexibility of interior division—fire safety—insurance rates—and many more things.

Furthermore, since "Mill Construction" depends first of all on adequate supply of great fine timbers, Weyerhaeuser supplemented the above investigation by a survey of its timber resources and distributing facilities in relation to "Mill Construction" needs.

The Douglas Fir Mills of the Weyerhaeuser organization are producing selected timbers of the finest possible wood for this purpose.

Through the Weyerhaeuser distributing plants in the heart of Eastern and Mid-Western markets, these timbers are laid down quickly and economically in all the principal industrial sections of this country.

THE Weyerhaeuser Expert Construction Engineer is available for consultation with the Industrial Man, his Building Engineer and his Architect.

His services are purely consultative, and rendered without charge—a characteristic Weyerhaeuser personal contribution to greater efficiency in the employment of America's lumber resources.

Responsible members of industrial concerns are also invited to send for complimentary copies of the Weyerhaeuser books—"Industrial Buildings," written for the Business Man, and "Structural Timbers of Douglas Fir," a book for the Building Engineer, Architect, and Purchasing Agent.

WEYERHAEUSER FOREST PRODUCTS
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Producers for industries of pattern and flask lumber, factory grades for remanufacturing, lumber for boxing and crating, ornamental timbers for industrial building. And each of these items in the species and type of wood best suited for the purpose.

Also producers of White Red Cedar poles for telephone and electric transmission lines.

Weyerhaeuser Forest Products are distributed through the established trade channels by the Weyerhaeuser Sales Company, Spokane, Washington, with branch offices at 208 So. La Salle St., Chicago; 120 Broadway, New York; Lexington Bldg., Baltimore; and 208 University Ave., St. Paul and with representatives throughout the country.

Figure 28. A *Life* magazine advertisement for products, employing an interior factory sketch by W.E.S. Dyer. Source: *Life*, 18 September 1924.

Figure 29. The northwest and southwest elevations of the Manufacturing Building. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2024.

Criterion H

The Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company at 4889 Umbria Street satisfies Criterion H as a building that, owing to its distinctive siting, scale, and industrial character, represents a long-established and familiar visual feature of the Manayunk neighborhood. Prominently located at the intersection of Umbria and Lemonte Streets, the building occupies a highly visible corner site along a sloping topography, where its elevated base and expansive horizontal massing create a commanding presence within the surrounding landscape. The structure's one-story form with its raised foundation, punctuated by a rhythmic series of segmentally-arched window openings, distinguishes it from earlier multi-story mill buildings while still reinforcing the industrial identity of the district. Its orientation along the street and its substantial footprint make it a defining component of the streetscape, particularly as viewed from Umbria Street, a principal thoroughfare through the northwestern part of Manayunk.

Equally significant is the building's retention of its terra cotta parapet signage reading "Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company," which remains prominently centered on the façade and serves as a rare and highly visible artifact of the site's historic use. This feature reinforces the building's identity as an industrial landmark and contributes to its continued recognition within the community. The combination of its distinctive architectural form and corner prominence has ensured that the factory remains a visually identifiable and memorable feature of the neighborhood for generations. Even as surrounding industrial uses have evolved or diminished, the building continues to anchor the historic industrial nature of the area and exemplify the enduring physical presence of Manayunk's twentieth-century manufacturing heritage.

Figure 30. The permanent, attractively rendered signage of the Manayunk Plush Manufacturing Company is evocative of the location as well as the once prominent industry. Source: Oscar Beisert, 2025.

7. Major Bibliographic Sources

This nomination is sponsored by the Ridge Park Civic Association and authored by Oscar Beisert, Architectural Historian, Keeping Society of Philadelphia.

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