

DANIEL F. WATERS GERMANTOWN DYE WORKS,
BUILDING I
37-55 East Wister Street
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-213-I

HAER
PA
51-PHILA,
716I-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Northeast Region
Philadelphia Support Office
U.S. Custom House
200 Chestnut Street
Philadelphia, PA 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

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HAER No. PA-213-I

Location:

37-55 E. Wister Street
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

Present Owner:

Greater Germantown Housing Development Corporation
48 East Penn Street
Philadelphia, PA 19144

Present Occupant:

Vacant.

Significance:

This 1862 structure, the original Mills' dyeing room, was remodeled in a later corporate expansion in 1877.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

Date(s) of Erection:

Building I contains three sections: the south and east sections were built in 1862 and the western section was built in 1877 (Hexamer 1866 and 1878).

Architect:

Unknown.

Original/Subsequent Owners:

See Chain of Title.

Builder, Contractor, Suppliers:

Unknown.

Original Plans/Construction:

Originally, the east section of Building I, roughly 20' x 70', was a 2-story stone building with a tin roof. Both floors were drying rooms and four ventilators were located in the roof. A one-story stone coal room with a slate roof, roughly 20' x 20', was built extending west from the building's southern portion. The coal fed the boilers located in the first floor of the eastern section. Two exterior wooden stairways allowed access to the second-floor drying room.

Alterations/Additions:

A three-story brick addition was applied in 1877 with slate roof. The addition contained drying rooms with a smokestack and two steam boilers, and two rooftop ventilators. Concurrent with this addition, the southern portion of Building I was extensively renovated. The boilers and smokestack were removed and the building converted to use as a two-story coalhole and a one-story fire-hole to serve the drying rooms.

B. Historical Context

Building I represents the incremental growth of the Germantown Dye Works and the functional importance of the drying rooms to the dyeing process.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

Architectural Character:

Building I, a mid-nineteenth century vernacular industrial building, is unique within the complex for its sheared northwest corner.

Condition of Fabric:

Building I is in generally good condition. Minor pointing failure and weathering, all facades.

B. Description of Exterior

Overall Dimensions:

Approximately 40' x 50', 3 storys.

Foundations:

Brick on grade.

Walls:

Brick, common bond.
Thickness: first floor and second floor: 13"
third floor: 9".

Structural System/Framing:

Load bearing brick masonry walls with internal wood framing.

Porches/Stoops/Balconies/Bulkheads:

Not applicable.

Chimneys:

One chimney located at northwest corner of western portion.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

Southern section of the building contains a central door fitted with modern double-leaf doors. One ground-level door on west facade, single leaf with mid-20th century surround the modern replacement door.

Windows/Shutters:

South section has a pair of arch-headed windows, brick sills and lintels, with a simple molded frame and sash missing. All second and third story windows arch-headed, brick rowlocks and sills. All original sash removed on the southern elevation, and windows fitted with modern aluminum storm sash. The original 12/12 windows exist on the eastern elevation. On the first floor, two large openings with brick sills, straight rowlock lintels, fitted with c.1950 aluminum awning sash.

Roof:

Built-up asphalt roofing, with one skylight.

C. Description of Interior

Floor Plans:

All three floors consist of two rooms each divided by a permanent partition, formerly the exterior wall of the early eastern section (Old Building 3). The southern section is divided into two rooms.

Stairways:

Originally, interior access was via a cast-iron stair.

Flooring:

The floors of the fire and coal holes were originally brick and presently cement slab. Floors in the eastern section (Old Building 3) were wood lath and the remainder iron slat floors.

Wall/Ceiling Finishes:

All finishes exposed with exception of coalhole: exposed or painted brick. Western section of the second floor has a drying room with an iron lath floor and ceiling for drying purposes.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

Rolling fire doors throughout.

Windows:

Unfinished reveals.

Decorative Features and Trim:

Not applicable.

Hardware:

Not applicable.

Mechanical Equipment:

Heating, air conditioning, ventilation:

Central steam heat.

Lighting:

Electrical, originally lighted by gas.

Plumbing:

Not applicable.

D. Site

General Setting/Orientation:

Building I is bordered by Building H on the south, Building K on the north, and row house properties along Lena Street to the east. The cartway, extending from Wister Street, forms Building I's western boundary.

Historic Landscape Design:

Prior to its infill, Building I once accessed the larger interior courtyard that contained the stable.

Outbuildings:

According to the 1875 Hexamer Survey, five wooden water tanks containing 5,000 gallons each were located east of Building I. These were not evident on the 1878 Hexamer Survey. A chicken house is found on both surveys, near the location of the water tanks.