

ERIE BURIAL CASE COMPANY  
819-823 East Ninth Street  
Erie  
Erie County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-6236

HABS  
PA  
25-ERI,  
15-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

HABS  
PA  
25-ERI,  
15

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

ERIE BURIAL CASE COMPANY

HABS NO. PA-6236

Location: 819-823 East Ninth Street, Erie, Erie County, Pennsylvania

USGS Erie North, Pennsylvania Quadrangle  
17.577370.4664760

Significance: The Erie Burial Case Company, a two-story industrial building built in 1922, represents the specialized hardwood burial case industry. The simple industrial vocabulary of the building, with its shops and showroom, retains the distinctive architecture of a small, specialized industry associated with the Pennsylvania railroad transportation system.

Description: The building is covered with a flat, seamed tin and metal roof with a stepped cornice capped with concrete on the east façade facing the railroad. Vermiculated tile forms the south wall and the remainder of the east wall. On the north façade, where the main entrance opens, the brick cornice is corbelled. The building has a steel-frame structural system with brick walls and pilasters on the north, west, and part of the east walls. The reinforced concrete basement is partially exposed with windows that are now infilled with concrete blocks. With the exception of four double-hung second story windows, all bays have been infilled with glass blocks, air conditioner units, and/or new windows. Two doors that led to the shipping area on the north facade have been infilled. One garage door has been enlarged. There is a garage in the basement that is currently used for the storage of vehicles. The main entrance into the building opens onto East Ninth Street through an *in antis* entry with seven stone steps leading to the front door. The front door has been replaced but is surrounded by original sidelights. A metal roof with a chiseled stone façade and stone roof supports covers the entry.

An open corridor divides the first floor of the building into two sections with the offices, casket showroom, and hardwood workshops on the east side and the cloth trimming, soft cabinet workshop, shipping rooms and production on the west side. The corridor led to a rough mill room. This room now functions as a garage for storing vehicles for the Erie School District, the current owner. On the southwest façade were the former boiler room and repair shops.

Original interior architectural features are still extant in the former office, casket showroom, and entry. Ornate coved tin ceilings were used in the office and entry. The floors in these two areas are red terra cotta, a material used on the walls of the entry as well. An original multi-pane door leads from the entry into the casket showroom. In the showroom is a ceiling with a grid-pattern of mahogany and an original floor is covered with a pattern of light blue tile crosses in a background of

white tile. Both the office and the showroom have been subdivided with recent partitions. The original company safe is located in the office.

The second floor originally consisted of an L-shaped storage area above the office, showroom, shipping, storage and cloth trimming areas of the first floor. Skylights allowed light into the workspaces on both floors. Interior walls on the second floor had windows to allow more light into these areas from the central skylights. These windows are now covered with plywood. This floor has been expanded and subdivided. Two elevators have been added, one for freight. Two sets of stairways have been added.

History:

This industrial building was built in 1922 by the Erie Burial Case Company to expand and replace their primary facility on the 1900 block of Peach Street. The company began production as the Erie Coffin Works founded in 1867 by Dr. Patterson. When the name changed in 1876 to the Erie Burial Casket Company, the firm operated from a plant on Plank Road south of Erie. In 1888, the company moved its location to 1210-1214 Peach Street in the City of Erie. In 1904, Thomas W. Walker purchased the business and renamed the firm the Erie Burial Case Company. In 1923, the company opened a manufacturing facility and showroom at 819-823 Ninth Street, while still maintaining the Peach Street location. In 1957, this family-owned business sold the building on Ninth Street to the Erie School District.

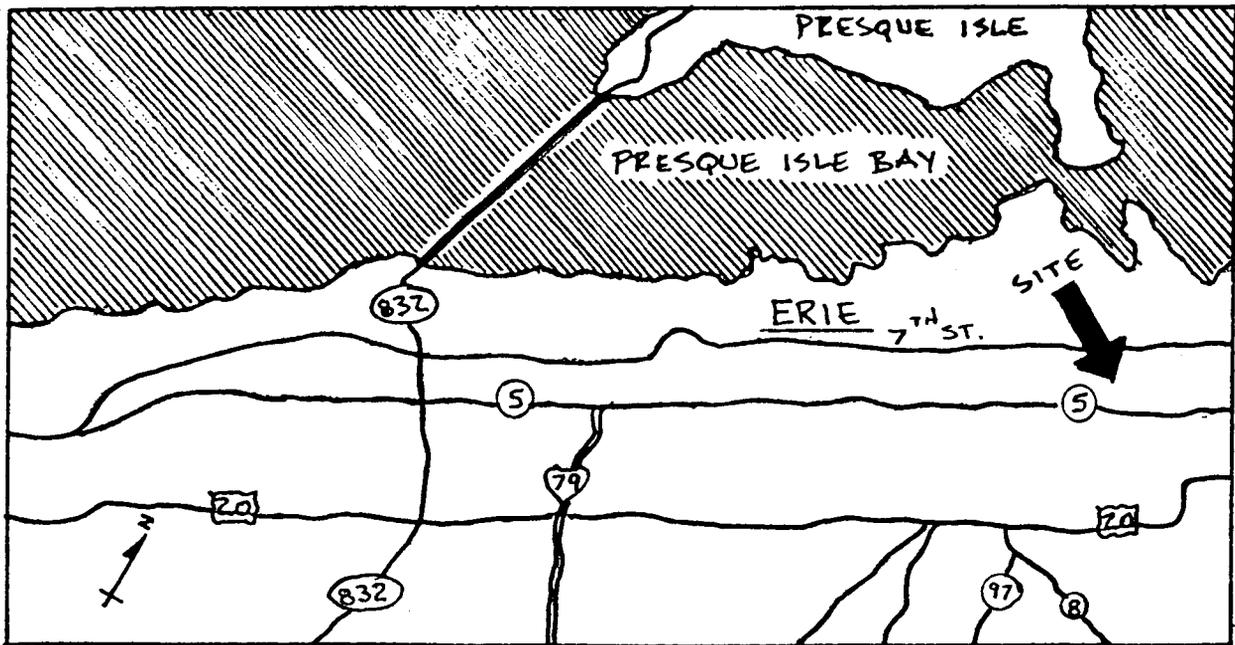
The building was constructed along the Pennsylvania Railroad as a manufacturing facility and showroom for hardwood, cloth, and metal burial caskets. The company specialized in caskets constructed of hardwoods including oak, bass, wood, cherry, maple, mahogany and obeche. The company was the only one in the country to use wood sealers to improve the closing mechanisms of caskets. In 1958, the company moved from their Peach Street plant and Ninth Street plant to an expanded facility at 2024 Filmore Avenue in West Millcreek Township, Erie County. In 1967, the firm was one of the nation's 400 burial case companies and one of only 75 companies to specialize in quality hardwood. The company remained in operation at other facilities until c.1975.

Sources:

Anonymous. Erie Burial Case Company, Erie Story, January 1967, pp. 2-3.  
Anonymous. Erie Burial Case Company, Erie Story, November 1958, pp. 12,13.  
Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Maps of Erie, Pennsylvania, 1941.

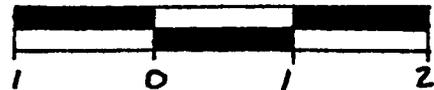
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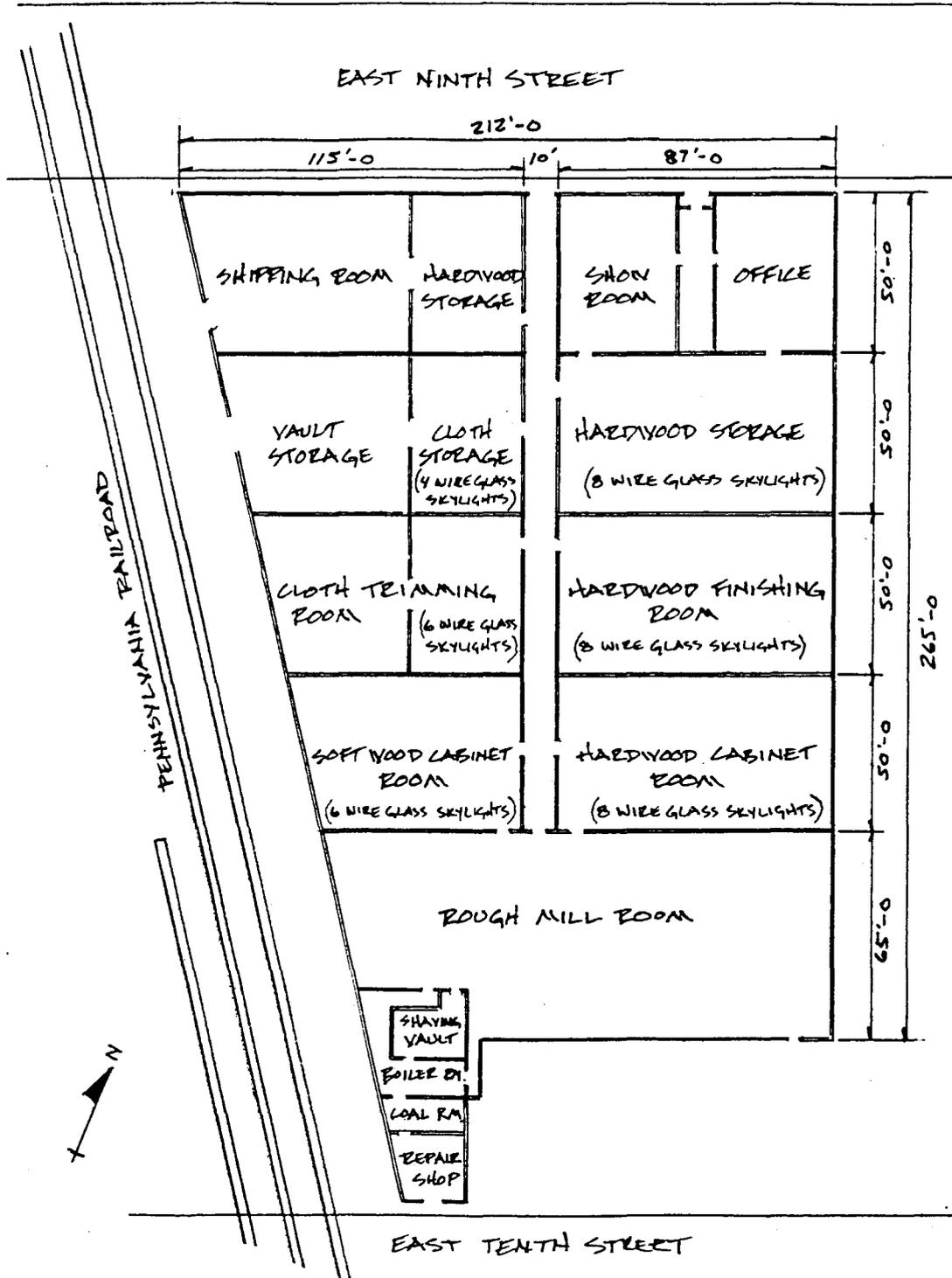
Christine Davis. September 1998.



LOCATION MAP

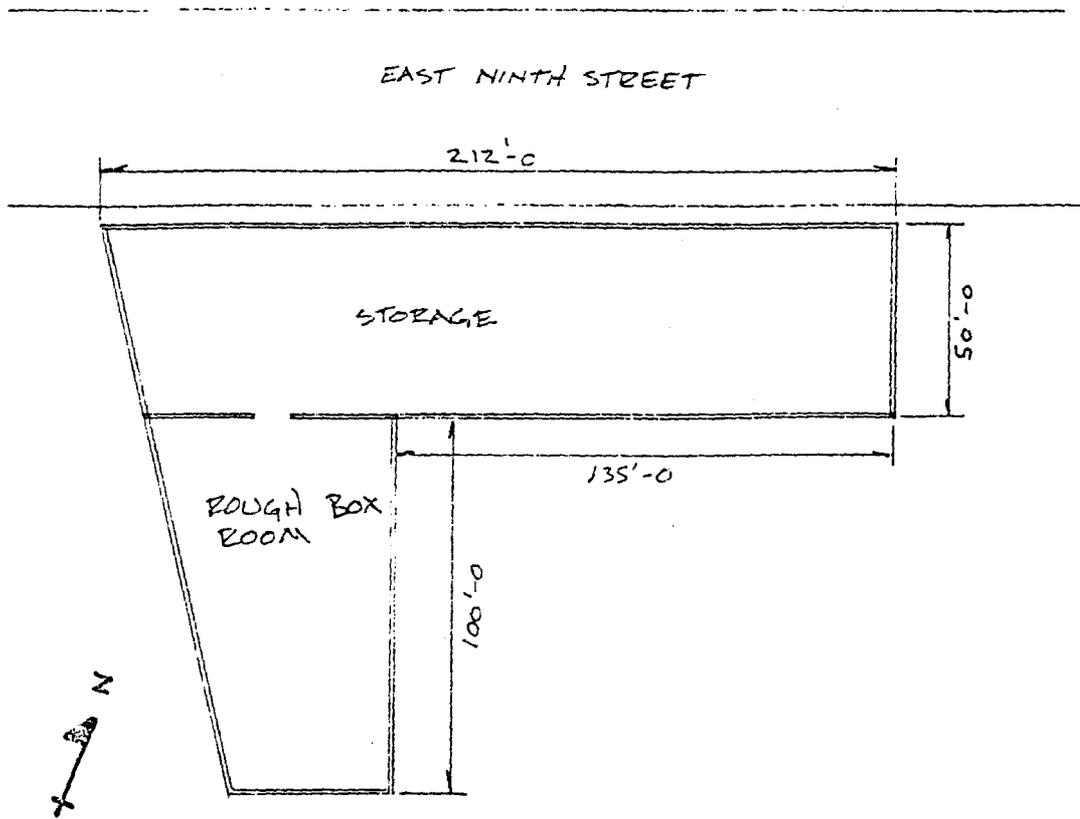
SCALE  
(MILES)





FIRST FLOOR PLAN





SECOND FLOOR PLAN



