

JOHN & JAMES DOBSON CARPET MILL (WEST PARCEL),  
BUILDING NO. 10  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5383-J

HABS  
PA  
51-PHILA,  
695J-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
Mid-Atlantic Regional Office  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19106

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**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**  
**JOHN AND JAMES DOBSON CARPET MILL (West Parcel), BUILDING 10**  
**HABS No. PA-5383-J**

Location:

4041-4055 Ridge Avenue  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania

Present Owner:

Rouse Urban Housing, Inc.  
1500 Walnut Street, 19th Floor  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102

Present Occupant:

Mixed commercial and industrial tenants, artist's studio and vacant.

Significance:

Constructed in 1894, Building 10 reflects the architectural character of the Dobson Mill in its rubblestone construction. Originally serving as a dyehouse, the building was an integral part in the functioning of the mill's textile production. The building remains as an important structure to the Dobson Mill complex, marking the mill's expansion and growth from its founding in the mid-nineteenth century.

## **PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

### **A. Physical History**

#### **Date(s) of Erection:**

1894 with circa 1900 addition and mid-twentieth century alterations. The building appears under construction in the 1894 Hexamer Insurance Survey.

#### **Architect:**

Unknown.

#### **Original/Subsequent Owners:**

See Chain of Title.

#### **Builder, Contractor, Supplier:**

Unknown.

#### **Original Plans/Construction:**

Built in 1894, Building 10, is an infill building on the Dobson Mill site. It was originally two stories in height and expanded circa 1900 with an additional two stories. This incremental construction is reflected in the discontinuity of the building's masonry; the lower stories are of loosely packed rubble joined with a thick mortar bed, while the upper stories display a more squared rubble with smaller mortar joints. The interior structure is wood framed with wood piers supporting massive girders and beams. A polygonal four-story stair with tongue and groove siding is at the northeast corner of the building. Constructed at the corner of Ridge Avenue and Crawford Street, it served as a dyehouse throughout the period of production at the Dobson Mill.

#### **Alterations and Additions:**

A two-story addition was added onto the building circa 1900. It was most likely at this time that the impressive four-story internal stair was constructed. There is also an early-twentieth-century ground story garage door on the south elevation. The building, though altered, continued to serve as a dyehouse.

### **B. Historical Context**

Building 10's use during the Dobson's tenure remained as a dyehouse for the mill's extensive textiles production. Building 10 is located between Buildings 8 and 9, infilling the western portion

of the west parcel. It is an important element in the continuous wall of mill building that defines the Dobson complex on Ridge Avenue and Crawford Street.

## **PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION**

### **A. General Statement**

#### **Architectural Character:**

Built on the southwestern edge of the west parcel of the Dobson Mill site, on ground that slopes steeply to the south, this building reflects the typical rubblestone construction of the complex. Its four-story exterior masonry walls display two different phases of building. The open interior spaces and extended ceiling heights are characteristic of mill buildings used as warehouses and production rooms.

#### **Condition of Fabric:**

The masonry and roof are in sound condition. Interior spaces are primarily intact reflecting their original configurations. The building has severe structural problems resulting from partial failure of interior columns and damage to the roof system from a circa 1960 roof mounted billboard.

### **B. Description of Exterior**

#### **Overall Dimensions:**

E elev.-127'; S elev.-51.2'; W elev.-136.2'.

#### **Foundations:**

Rubblestone.

#### **Walls:**

Rubblestone terminating in simple wooden bargeboard. Rubble is punctuated by steel tie rods on the upper two stories. First two stories - randomly laid stones with thick barn dash mortar joints, second two stories - square and fitted stones with slightly recessed smaller mortar joints terminating in a built-up wood cornice with modern flashing.

#### **Structural System, Framing:**

Wood with regularly spaced, square section, wood piers carrying massive girders and beams. Load bearing masonry walls with post and lintel interior frame construction.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

West elevation- loading bay to north serves as an entrance with a pair of double-leaf, cross-braced wood doors under a brick soldier course lintel, single-leaf modern steel door under a brick soldier course lintel. South elevation- ground story garage door under steel lintel and single-leaf wood door with transom under segmental brick arch. East elevation- ground story fenestration not visible due to Building 9A.

Windows and Shutters:

Industrial steel sash, mostly infilled or reglazed, with segmental brick window arches. Although approximately one-half of the first story and one-quarter of the second story windows retain their original 12/12 wooden double hung sash, the sash is deteriorated beyond salvage.

Roof:

Low pitched gable.

**C. Description of Interior**

Floor Plans:

Triangular, largely unpartitioned utilitarian space on all floors interrupted by three rows of wooden columns.

Stairways:

Four-story polygonal wood stair with tongue and groove siding providing access to Building 9.

Flooring:

First floor - concrete, upper floors - original and replacement industrial wood flooring.

Wall/Ceiling Finishes:

Plastered rubble walls. Ceilings are exposed timber and planking.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

No surviving original or historic interior doors.

Windows:

All windows recessed in unornamented plaster.

Decorative Features and Trim:

N/A.

Hardware:

Original hardware, which is no longer extant, is presumed to have been utilitarian in character.

Mechanical Equipment:

Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: See PA-5383-C for heating system, air conditioning is N/A, ventilation by window mounted fans, exhaust ducts or air conditioning units.

Lighting: Modern and strip fluorescent, ceiling mounted, lighting.

Plumbing: Early-20th-century, ceiling mounted, sprinkler fire suppression system.

**D. Site**

General Setting/Orientation:

Building 10 is located at the southwestern corner of the west parcel of the Dobson complex. The building's elevations form the corner at Crawford Street and Ridge Avenue. Highly visible from outside of the complex, Building 10 is an important element in the continuous wall of mill buildings defining the Dobson complex.

Historic Landscape Design:

See Historic Context Section.

Outbuildings:

N/A.