

JOHN & JAMES DOBSON CARPET MILL (WEST PARCEL),  
BUILDING NO. 24  
Philadelphia  
Philadelphia County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5383-U

HABS  
PA  
51-PHILA,  
695U-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

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

HABS  
PA  
51-PHILA,  
695U-

**HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY**  
**JOHN AND JAMES DOBSON CARPET MILL (West Parcel), BUILDING 24**  
**HABS No. PA-5383-U**

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.

Significance:

Building 24, built in 1874/75, is significant as a reflection of the continued expansion of the Dobsons' mill following the Civil War. It is also of note for its construction as one of the first buildings on the site to use brick arches over the windows.

## **PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION**

### **A. Physical History**

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

1874/1875 with later alterations. Building 24 first appears on the 1877 Hexamer Survey as Mill No. 4 with an 1874/75 construction date.

#### **Architect:**

Unknown.

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

See Chain of Title.

#### **Builder, Contractor, Suppliers:**

Unknown.

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

The northern end of Building 24 was built as two-story, tin gable roof structure with regularly spaced, brick segmental arched windows. Typical ceiling heights were 12' and 14' and the wall depths 24". The building's southern end, which was situated at a lower grade than the northern end, was built as a three-story structure with similar window fenestration, ceiling heights of 10' and wall depths of 20-24". Floors in the building were 4" thick, 1" of yellow pine underlaid with 3" of floor board. The northern end of the building had an interior wood stair and the southern end an exterior stair, also of wood. Rooms were lit by gas and heated by wrought iron steam pipes. A smokestack of stone and brick, plastered on the inside, rose 20' above the roof of the southern end of the building. Functions for carding and mule spinning were originally housed in the northern end while wool drying, weaving and sorting operations were located in the south end of the structure. All of these operations were powered by a steam boiler also located in the southern end of the building. Communication between the two buildings was via iron-lined doors.

#### **Alterations/Additions:**

At undetermined dates in the mid-twentieth century, the southern end of the building was stuccoed and the original boiler and smokestack were removed. The first story of the southern end was also partially obscured by infill. The fenestration on all elevations of both ends of the structure was infilled with either plywood or cinder block.

## **B. Historical Context**

Building 24 was originally known as Mill No. 4 and documents the continued growth of the west parcel. It expresses the same mill character, only slightly less grand, as the earlier buildings on the Dobson site, constructed of local schist stone with regularly spaced fenestration and low gable roof. The two ends of the structure reflect the steep grade changes on the site. The southern end (now partially infilled) contains an additional story in height.

### **Condition of Fabric:**

The masonry on Building 24 is in fair condition. The stucco on the southern end of the structure has failed in many areas and the mortar joints of the exposed rubble have eroded.

## **C. Description of Exterior**

### **Overall Dimensions:**

1st floor, southern end- S. elev. 61.2'; E. elev. 44.8'; N. elev. 42.8'; W. elev. 19.2'; N. elev. 18.4'.

### **Foundations:**

Rubblestone.

### **Walls:**

Rubblestone and stuccoed rubblestone on the southwest end of the building, with regularly spaced fenestration relieved by brick arches. Infill partially obscures the first floor of the southern end of the building. The west and east elevations are punctuated by metal brackets marking steel tie rods to the interior. There is a hoist on the western elevation.

### **Structural System/Framing:**

Wood columns carrying floor joists reinforced with iron tie rods.

### **Porches/Stoops/Balconies/Bulkheads:**

West elevation- concrete loading dock which opens onto a loading bay and concrete stoop.

### **Chimneys:**

None.

Openings:

Doorways/Doors:

South elevation- garage entrance at basement level with brick segmental arch. West elevation- loading bay with steel lintel and modern double-leaf and single-leaf metal doors, on second floor double-leaf door below hoist and infilled segmentally arched opening. North elevation- second story window opening altered to a door which is accessed by an exterior steel stair with pipe rail.

Windows/Shutters:

South elevation- seven bays of segmentally arched windows, all of which have been infilled. West elevation - one original 12/12 wood sash and one steel industrial sash remaining, all others infilled. North elevation- all windows either infilled or reglazed with modern sash. East elevation- first story infilled, second story non-original steel industrial sash.

Roof:

Low pitched gable roof carried on an open wooden truss. Structural system and sheathing (built up 4-ply) of the roof have been severely damaged by water penetration.

**C. Description of Interior**

Floor Plans:

First floor- only in southern end of structure- L-shaped; upper floors throughout building- rectangular with L-shaped end- unfinished, unpartitioned, utilitarian mill space. Northern end of building has been recently partitioned and has wood paneled walls, drop ceilings and hollow core doors.

Stairways:

No interior stairs.

Flooring:

Wood plank flooring.

Wall/Ceiling Finishes:

Walls are of plastered rubble, ceilings are exposed timber and planking.

Doorways/Doors:

Modern hollow core doors.

Windows:

All windows are 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 and 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 24's two sections (northern and southern) mark a steep grade change on the Dobson west parcel. Partially infilled in the twentieth century, the first floor of the southern end of the structure is now obscured. The building is located on the northeastern portion of the site between the earlier mill buildings along Scott's Lane and the Carpet Mill in the center of the west parcel.

Historic Landscape Design:

See Historic Context Section.

Outbuildings:

N/A.