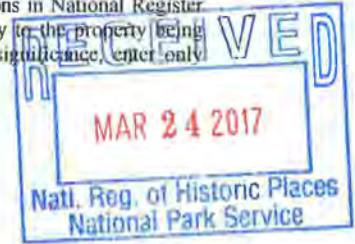


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

56-977

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



1. Name of Property

Historic name: A. Mecky Company Building

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 1705 W. Allegheny Avenue

City or town: Philadelphia State: PA County: Philadelphia

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

	<u>3/10/2017</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	
<u>Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission – State Historic Preservation Office</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	
In my opinion, the property <input type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
Signature of commenting official:	
Date	
Title :	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

for Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

5-8-17
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

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Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s)

District

Site

Structure

Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRIAL – Manufacturing Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Stone, Terra Cotta

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The A. Mecky Company Building stands at 1705 W. Allegheny Avenue in the Allegheny West neighborhood of Philadelphia, PA. The 5-story building is clad in red brick with stone and terra cotta detailing. The 1st and 2nd floors were built in 1910 with an extant 3-story rooftop addition that dates to 1916. The nominated property contains one contributing resource that retains all seven aspects of integrity.

The building stands near the southeast corner of the block bounded by W. Allegheny Avenue to the south, N. 17th Street to the east, W. Westmoreland Street to the north and the Southeastern Pennsylvania Transit Authority line to the west. It is immediately abutted by a concrete sidewalk to the south, a narrow paved lot to the east and overgrown concrete lots to the north and west. At the east end of the north elevation is a projecting block wall, which is part of an adjacent, unrelated parcel. The boundary line of this parcel, which projects 29.84 feet into the northeast corner of the nominated building, can be seen in Figure #9. The nominated parcel includes only the building and the overgrown lot to the north. There are no other buildings. The remainder of the block contains a few scattered rowhouses along N. 17th Street

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to the north but primarily consists of overgrown concrete lots. The south side of W. Allegheny Avenue between N. 17th and N. 18th Street contains 2- and 3-story rowhouses. The subject property is located approximately two miles east of the Schuylkill River and approximately one and one-half miles south of Route 1. The surrounding neighborhood consists of a mix of late nineteenth century two- and three-story brick row houses, scattered low-rise industrial buildings and new low-scale residential construction.

The building has a square footprint with a slightly pitched roof. There are also 1-story penthouses near the southwest and southeast corners, mechanical equipment scattered throughout and a low parapet. In 2015, most of the windows on the south elevation were replaced with multi-light aluminum units in the original openings. However, some of the multi-light wood windows remain on both the north and south elevations to convey the original configuration of the openings. The stone heads and brick sills also remain throughout.

The south elevation, facing W. Allegheny Avenue, is seven bays wide, which are separated by stylized brick pilasters. The pilasters are topped with elaborated, bracketed stone capitals with geometric detailing and the letters "AM" in bas relief. There is also terra cotta coping along the crenellated parapet. On the 1st floor, the westernmost bay contains an elevated rectangular opening with contemporary infill. The second and fifth bays from the west contain paired 12/12 wood windows with stone sills. The third, fourth and seventh bays from the west contain large, vehicular openings with contemporary infill. The sixth bay from the west contains a contemporary double-leaf aluminum door with a 1-light aluminum transom and 2-light aluminum sidelights. Above the entrance is stucco infill and in front of it is a contemporary metal gate. On the 2nd through 5th floors, the westernmost bay contains a narrow, open fire balcony with a recessed single-leaf, 4-light arched metal fire door that accesses the stair and a single-leaf arched metal fire door that accesses the floor plate (Photograph #15). The second through sixth bays from the west contain multi-light aluminum windows in the original openings that date to c. 2015. The easternmost bay contains a wide, open fire balcony with a recessed single-leaf, 4-light arched metal fire door and a single-leaf arched metal fire door that accesses the floor plate (Photograph #20). Please note that the enclosed existing plans show these doors as fixed (Figure #8). The current existing condition matches that of the westernmost bay.

The east and west elevations have no openings but there is a slight change in the color of the red brick that indicates the two building campaigns. There were never any structures that abutted these elevations but it is likely that the lack of openings on these elevations is because the owner and architect acknowledged that this was an eventual possibility.

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The north elevation, facing the interior of the block, is also seven bays wide. The majority of the openings have been covered with painted plywood but a few of the paired 12/12 wood windows remain exposed (Photographs #3, 4 and 7). Additional original wood windows remain behind the plywood and are visible from the interior (Photographs #12 and 17).

Interior

The interior of the building has one freight elevator and two stairways. The U-return stairways are located in the southwest and southeast corners of the building (Photographs #20-22). They have painted wood treads and risers and painted wood railings. The elevator is located to the north of the southwest stairway (Photograph #19). All circulation provides access between all floors.

On the interior of the building, the 1st floor is divided roughly in half by a painted cinder block wall and the upper floors are entirely open in plan (Photographs #10-14, 16-18, 23 and 24). On all floors, the floor plate is bisected by an axial grid of painted wood columns that decrease in dimension as the floor levels increase. The other existing finishes include wood and plywood flooring, painted and exposed brick walls, painted wood ceilings and floor joists and exposed mechanicals. Because the building had a continuous industrial use between the time the company left the building in 1931 and the time the building was vacated in the late 20th century, there are no extant fixtures associated with the A. Mecky Company, such as machinery. In one location – the northeastern section of the 2nd floor slab between the northernmost column line and the north perimeter wall –, the building has become so deteriorated that entire sections of flooring are missing (Photograph #12).

Integrity

The A. Mecky Company Building retains integrity. The building remains intact from the last phase of major construction in 1916 with no demolition or significant new construction. Both the overall form and the defining interior and exterior industrial characteristics remain, including its brick masonry sections, brick, stone and terra cotta detailing, regular window openings, painted wood columns, exposed painted wood flooring and ceiling systems and exposed painted brick walls. While some of the window openings have been infilled or contain new units, the newer elements do not detract from the overall appearance and the original fenestration patterns remain visible on both elevations and for both building campaigns. While there is no specific interior configuration or finishes, other than those referenced above, the

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floors would have been primarily open in plan during the period of significance and therefore any loss does not have any significant adverse impact.

The quality, placement and condition of the construction materials, as well as the Industrial Revivalist architectural style are both highly characteristic of the period and also all remain wholly intact.

The location and overall setting of the building remain intact since the initial construction, although there has been a significant loss of neighboring industrial fabric. The design and materials similarly retain their integrity. The workmanship is expressed in a consistent architectural style, is of good quality and is in keeping with contemporary trends. The feeling and associations of the building also have a high level of integrity, in large part because of the integrity of the previous five aspects. Although the equipment, furnishings and people have long since departed, the intact finishes, the voluminous spaces and the consistency of the two building campaigns effectively relay the sense of place and the notable industrial history of this once prominent manufacturer.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY

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Period of Significance

1910-1931

Significant Dates

1910
1916

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Stearns and Castor

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The A. Mecky Company has local significance under Criterion A, Industry, both as the only Philadelphia manufacturer of “juvenile wheeled goods”, including velocipedes, tricycles, hand cars, wagons and wheelbarrows during the period of significance and as an innovator in that field. It was also one of the first companies to orient its marketing toward children, a practice that became standard and ultimately revolutionized the industry. While located at 1705 W. Allegheny Avenue, the company also had a secondary surprising but prolific sideline in small electric appliances, including electric toasters and heaters. The period of significance begins in 1910, when the company purchased the lot and began construction, and ends in 1931, when the company was purchased by the E.C. Brown Company and operations were relocated to that company’s headquarters in Rochester, NY.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

A Brief History of the A. Mecky Company

The history of the company begins in Philadelphia in 1881 when the firm of Lurey and Mecky was formed to manufacture bicycles and tricycles.¹ In 1883, August Mecky (1852-1909) bought his partner out of the business and formally began the A. Mecky Company. On March 1, 1905, the company was incorporated in Philadelphia with a capital stock of \$75,000. At that time, the company was located at 3631-3639 N. Smedley Street, slightly north of its W. Allegheny Avenue location.²

On February 16, 1909, August Mecky died and his obituary stated that he was “a well-known manufacturer of children’s coaches and vehicles.”³ Shortly thereafter, Richard G. Ledig, Mecky’s son-in-law, was made president of the company.⁴

In June 1910, the company purchased the lot located at 1705 W. Allegheny Avenue and commissioned the Philadelphia architectural firm of Stearns and Castor to design a 2-story

¹ August Mecky emigrated from Germany to Philadelphia in 1871.

² The Mecky’s lived at 3432 N. 17th Street, just .3 miles north. The N. Smedley Street building is no longer standing.

³ “Philadelphia.” *Hardwood Record* 27:9 (25 February 1909): 36.

⁴ Ledig was married to Mecky’s only child, Annie.

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building measuring 110'0" feet from east to west and 100'0" form north to south.⁵ The estimated cost of the building was \$25,000 and Henry E. Baton of Philadelphia was the contractor.⁶ In March 1916, Stearns and Castor added an additional 3-stories to the building at the company's request.⁷ Given the proximity of the construction dates and the use of the same architect, it is barely evident that the building was built in two phases. The only locations in which the phasing is visible is in the slight change in brick color on the east and west elevations. The building in its 5-story configuration appears on a 1916 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map: "A. Mecky Co., Velocipedes, Toys, Etc." (Figure 1). The map lists the 1st floor as being used for pressing and shipping; the 2nd floor for office space and assembling; the 3rd floor for packing, polishing and plating; the 4th floor for a machine shop; and the 5th floor for a paint shop and additional assembly space.

In 1916, the year the building was completed, the company was one of six manufacturers listed in the Industrial Directory under the heading of "children's carriages, sleds, etc." (Figure 2). It was the second-largest company in the category with ninety-seven employees. The largest company was the Bloch Go-Cart Company, which manufactured baby carriages and had 104 employees.⁸ The third largest manufacturer was L. Rieber and Co., which manufactured toys, furniture and baby carriages and had twenty-five employees.⁹ As with many of these categories, they cover a broad swath of the market and do not always address the technicalities of the individual companies.

In 1919, the company had 110 employees. It was still the second largest employer with Bloch Go-Cart Company having 170 employees and L. Rieber and Co. having twenty-two employees.¹⁰

⁵ *Engineering News* 63: 25 (23 June 1910): 275. This was the first construction on the lot. 1875, 1895 1901 and 1910 atlases show that the lot had various owners but no actual construction. It is not clear why the company decided to move but the new location was significantly larger than its N. Smedley Street location.

⁶ Henry E. Baton was a local contractor who also built the Presser Home for Retired Music Teachers, the Corn Exchange National Bank, the Ninth National Bank, and the Barnes Foundation. The company retained the N. Smedley Street building at the time of the relocation and leased it to various manufacturers including the George M. Snyder Paper Box Company, the Mitchell Specialty Company and the Hamilton Beach Carpet Washing Company. They sold the building in 1918. "Factory Building for Sale." *Evening Public Ledger* (27 September 1918): 8.

⁷ *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide*, 31:9 (1 March 1916): 151.

⁸ *Alphabetical List of Charters of Corporations* (Harrisburg, PA: J.L.L. Kuhn, 1917): 23.

⁹ *Second Industrial Directory of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, PA: William Stanley Ray, 1916): 1294, 1326.

¹⁰ *Third Industrial Directory of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, PA: William Stanley Ray, 1919): 956, 984.

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The company continued to grow and had 130 employees in 1922. It was gaining ground on the Bloch Go-Cart Company, which had only eight more employees, and was still significantly ahead of the third largest manufacturer, the American Baby Carriage Company, had only twenty-three employees.¹¹ The 1922 directory is also the first to cross list the company under “electrical suppliers” as well.”¹²

A 1925 Bromley Atlas shows no change to the building but lists the company as a manufacturer of “children’s vehicles” (Figure 3). By the end of 1930, the company had its “peak production period” with a profit of approximately \$500,000 and a high of 275 employees.¹³ It is possible to assume that the introduction of the new product line of electrical appliances can account for the enormous growth of the company during this decade.

In 1931, the company was purchased by the E.C. Brown Company and operations were relocated to their headquarters in Rochester, NY. In keeping with the notion that disparate product lines were not incompatible within a single company, the E.C. Brown Company was best known for its manufacture of water sprinklers and sprayers.¹⁴ The E.C. Brown Company actively continued to advertise and sell the Velo-King and the other assorted products manufactured by the company.

The reason for the sale of the A. Mecky Company is not entirely clear but period newspapers state that the Rochester Chamber of Commerce, the Rochester Industrial Development Corporation, the Rochester Savings Bank and the Genesee Valley Trust Company worked together to recruit the company and finance the sale.¹⁵ Richard G. Ledig continued to work with the E.C. Brown Company as an advisor and vice-president.¹⁶ Because of the popularity and success of the Velo-King label, the E. C. Brown Company continued to manufacture and heavily advertise velocipedes with that moniker. After the sale of the company, the building appears to no longer have any association with it.

¹¹ *Fourth Industrial Directory of Pennsylvania* (Harrisburg, PA: J.L.L. Kuhn, 1922): 1120, 1180, 1227.

¹² The directories make no distinction between how many employees were specifically engaged in the manufacture of toys versus toasters or whether or not there was overlap.

¹³ “Local Firm Acquires Philadelphia Juvenile Vehicle Manufactory.” *Rochester Times-Union* (17 March 1931): 8. It is challenging to put these numbers in perspective, as most of the comparable bicycle brands were manufactured under the umbrellas of much larger companies, such as Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward.

¹⁴ In Philadelphia at this time, it was much more typical for a company to focus on a single product line.

¹⁵ “Local Firm Acquires Philadelphia Juvenile Vehicle Manufactory.”

¹⁶ “Steady Work Assured by Firm Merger.” *Democrat Chronicle* (18 March 1931): 1. Ledig does not appear to have relocated to Rochester.

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Products of the A. Mecky Company

The company charter of 1905 stated that the purpose of the company was for the manufacture of “children’s vehicles and toys” and early advertisements stated that they offered “anything for children in hand or foot propelled toys.”¹⁷ More specifically, its repertoire during the period of significance included velocipedes, tricycles, hand cars, doll carriages, pedal cars, wagons, wheelbarrows and pull toys. Essentially, any child’s toy that incorporated wheels was within their scope.

The company was perhaps best known for its manufacture of the velocipede, which was a tricycle that was propelled by attaching the pedal to the front axle or frame. They offered over fifteen models of velocipedes in the early 1910s onward, ranging in price from \$6.20 to \$13.50, depending on frame size, frame finish and tire size (Figure 4).¹⁸ Of these, there were also three different tubular models and five different low and medium priced models. There was a Velo-King scooter and a Velo-King Tot Car, which looked like a tricycle and offered both an adjustable seat and handlebar for long-term use. The company further distinguished between the models by age, with various options being made for 2 to 4 year olds, 4 to 6 year olds and 6 to 8 year olds.

Period advertisements also differentiated the velocipede as being “of extremely high quality” with a “motorcycle type saddle, with bigger tires, with rubber pedals, ball bearings, with rear wheels fitted with large nickel-plated hub caps with [a] guard over the front wheel.”¹⁹ They complimented these aesthetics with technical improvements in design, such as spot welding the bicycle frames rather than brazing them, as was the common practice, and attaching the wheel to the axle inside the hub, so that the flange would grip the spokes.

Not only did the company patent the “Velo-King” name and logo in 1914, but they also patented a specific velocipede design on November 24, 1915 (No. 1,563,094), which called for an adjustable frame and a more functional pedaling system, providing a velocipede that was “less expensive and more serviceable than constructions known heretofore” (Figure 5).²⁰

¹⁷ *List of Charters of Corporations during the Two Years Beginning June 1, 1903 and Ending May 31, 1905* (Harrisburg, PA: Harrisburg Publishing Co., 1905): 2; 1909 Advertisement.

¹⁸ “1938 Velo-King Tricycle.” <http://www.oldbike.eu/museum/childrens/1936-velo-king-tricycle-mecky-co/>. Accessed on August 29, 2016.

¹⁹ “Advertisement.” *Motorcycle and Bicycle Illustrated* (7 September 1922): 14.

²⁰ “Velocipede.” United States Patent No. 1,563,094 (24 November 1915).

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Such patents are one of the most effective ways to assess the contributions of a particular company to their field. The A. Mecky Company received nearly forty patents while located on W. Allegheny Avenue, most of which were some sort of wheeled children's toy itself or a part or element of that toy. Their scope included bicycles, scooters, velocipedes, tricycles, boxcars, baby carriages, folding baby carriages, coaster breaks, handlebars, tricycle seats, pedals, bicycle saddles, wheel hubs and velocipede seats. These inventions ranged in scope from the broad – a bicycle that easily converted into a scooter and back again – to the extremely specific – a new way to attach a rubber grip to a handlebar.

It is also interesting to note that, for over half of the patents, including the one for the velocipede, the applicant was Richard G. Ledig, who was known as the “velocipede king.”²¹ This indicates that he was not only president of the company and therefore in charge of its business side, but that he was also active in product research and development. As the remainder of the patents are attributed to separate individuals who are listed as assignors of the company, there is no reason to assume the Ledig himself wasn't responsible for the inventions.

In 1914, the company issued a statement that both summarized its accomplishments to date and would continue to apply for nearly the next two decades: “we have now reached the apex of our ambition; namely, to manufacture a line of children's vehicle that will completely satisfy both ourselves and our dealers, both the parent and child.”²²

In 1928, the company began to manufacture “Velo-King Walking Pull-Toys”, which was a non-mechanical metal toy that could “run, walk and waddle”, a mechanism that the company patented. The first and most popular of these toys was Black Sambo, modeled after the popular book by Helen Bannerman.²³ Sambo was 12 ¼” tall and 15” long, including the cart that he pulled and designed “to withstand a youngster's rough usage” (Figure 6).²⁴ In phrasing that certainly establishes the offering as a product of its time, period advertisements state that the toy “is smartly colored as shown – in fact, Sambo is a smart colored gentleman.”²⁵

Beginning in the early 1920s, the company also had a secondary line of small electronic appliances, for many of which they also obtained patents. It is not entirely clear why they

²¹ “Concern to Also Manufacture Velocipedes Buys Five Acres.” *The Morning Call* (4 August 1913): 1. Although the sale of the land appears to have gone through, there is no record of any construction taking place on behalf of the company.

²² “John Bing, Sales Manager.” *Hardware Dealers' Magazine* 42 (July 1914): 1328.

²³ “Walking Pull Toys.” US Trademark No. 252,106 (22 January 1929).

²⁴ 1928 Advertisement.

²⁵ 1928 Advertisement.

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adopted such an incongruous product line, but there are two probable explanations. The first is that Richard Ledig, the company's president had an interest in such items, and was indeed the assignor on many of the company's patents for electronic items. The second is that the overlap in material and manufacturing process between the two product lines was not all that disparate; one molded piece of metal is, in many ways, very much like another.

In addition to the patents listed for toys above, the company also obtained over ten patents for small appliances, including several for an electrolytic water heater and an accompanying guard, a carbon comb electrode, an electric radiant heating cover for food containers and a guard for an electric toaster or cooker. Other non-patented but company manufactured items included a home soldering iron, a portable electric furnace and an efficient electric battery.

There were however two appliances for which the company was particularly well known. The first was a patented electric table stove, which was colloquially known as the "Twin Bowl, Triple Purpose" toaster and also the "Ledig Mecky." Period advertisements also promoted it, somewhat inexplicably, as the "aristocrat of the breakfast table."²⁶ The toaster distinguished itself as being able to toast two slices of bread, "boil two eggs without water" and cook sausages all at the same time. If that wasn't enough of an offering, it could also toast marshmallows and crisp cereal, as the need arose.

The second item was the patented "Mecko Light and Heat Baker", an apparatus that provided light and heat therapy in hospital settings (Figure 7). It was a single, portable unit that could be placed around a person's hand or foot, for example and provide therapeutic light and heat. It was adjustable and could be used in one, two or three sections, each of which was lined with reflecting corrugated copper and contained three sixty-watt lamps. Each unit was also well insulated to prevent shock or burning to the patient. Period advertisements state that one unit could cover an approximate area of one square foot and weighed about eight pounds. If you did not need the unit for a medicinal function, it could also be converted into a "complete electric light bath cabinet" for giving sweat baths.²⁷

²⁶ This slogan was printed directly onto the boxes in which the toasters were sold. "Mecky 'Twin Bowl' Toaster Passes the \$1000 Mark on eBay." <http://www.oldbike.eu/museum/childrens/1936-velo-king-tricycle-mecky-co/>. Accessed on December 20, 2016.

²⁷ "'Mecko' Heat and Light Bakers for Skin and Body Treatment." *Electrical Record and Buyers' Reference* 25 (April 1919): 245.

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Advertising and the A. Mecky Company

The A. Mecky Company can also be understood in a larger, regional context through its advertising methods. At the beginning of the 20th century, “the heyday of the bicycle was over.... Lower prices made the bicycle possible for older children, and gradually a new market for bicycles developed in America – a children’s market.”²⁸ This market, however, has received little attention compared to their adult counterpart, which is initially surprising because, for much of the 20th century, children were the largest group in the United States who rode bicycles.²⁹ The A. Mecky Company acknowledged this discrepancy saying, “The most neglected opportunity in the Cycle business is the Juvenile Wheeled Goods. Many a jobber and dealer, by his own confession, “Would have starved to death” – as they put it – ... if they hadn’t sold Juvenile Cycle Goods.”³⁰

The first way in which this market was significantly and consistently recognized, however, was through advertising. Beginning in the 1910s, there was a “conscious and concerted effort by the bicycle industry to market to children” and the A. Mecky Company was one of the forerunners by nearly a decade, starting as early as 1911.³¹ From that point onward, the A. Mecky Company both wholly embraced the advertising trends and themes of the 1910s and 1920s and also established itself not only as progressive in terms of its timing but also in terms of its content.

At the time that the company moved to W. Allegheny Avenue, “...the bicycle became an indispensable accessory for [the middle class American child] [which was both] an emblem of parental love.”³² The advertising industry in general, and the A. Mecky Company in particular, capitalized on this, with text reading, “Make your boy happy this Xmas with a Velo-King.”³³

In this, and through other avenues, advertising copy particularly focused on the parents and also promoted the bicycle as an asset to their child’s upbringing.³⁴ The A. Mecky Company

²⁸ Arnold Schwinn & Company, *Fifty Years of Schwinn Built Bicycles: The Story of the Bicycle and Its Contributions to Our Way of Life, 1895-1945* (Chicago: Arnold Schwinn & Company, 1945): 55.

²⁹ Margaret Gruoff, *The Mechanical Horse: How the Bicycle Reshaped American Life* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2016): 114.

³⁰ 1924 Advertisement.

³¹ Gruoff, 114-115. Juvenile marketing in the bicycle industry did not really take off until the early 1920s. Robert J. Turpin, Diss. *Our Best Bet Is the Boy: A Cultural History of Bicycle Marketing* (Louisville, KY: University of Kentucky, 2013): 117.

³² Gruoff, 114.

³³ 1914 Advertisement.

³⁴ Turpin, 118-119.

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was no exceptions with advertisements exclaiming, “Here’s health and pleasure and outdoor fun for your kiddie!” and “builds sturdy youngsters.”³⁵ By touting the health benefits of a bicycle, it became the duty of the parent to buy one. A duty that was underscored by the added benefit of promoting youth and preparing these youngsters for manhood.³⁶

An offshoot of the notion of bicycle as a benefit was the use of advertising copy to highlight and resolve one of the larger concerns of the era, namely safety.³⁷ In addition to repeatedly stressing that their bicycles were safe and specifically developing “safety bicycles”, the A. Mecky Company also specifically spoke to parents saying, “We know something about the average Dad’s and Mother’s desire for their children to have the best and safest!”³⁸ Presumably, by acquiring an A. Mecky Company bicycle, a child would feel loved, be safe, happy and healthy and well prepared for his future. Not bad for a toy that was accessible to “everybody’s pocketbook.”³⁹

Perhaps not surprisingly, much of the advertising was targeted to boys rather than to girls.⁴⁰ Beginning in the 1910s, advertisements used both language and images to appeal to the stereotypical American boy and the A. Mecky Company was no exception, as discussed above. Despite this “noticeable emphasis” on boys, the A. Mecky Company was unique in the industry for focusing on girls as well.⁴¹ A 1928 advertisement proclaimed, “Girls – The ‘Velo-King’ Bike Is Now Here!” The follow up to this progressive text was more typical of its era: “for beauty, swiftness and easy riding.”

Building History

In 1910, the A. Mecky Company purchased an empty lot on W. Allegheny Avenue from Albert La Rue. Construction on a 2-story building began quickly and was followed, in 1916, with a 3-story addition above the 2nd floor. Between 1910 and 1916, the building was occupied exclusively by the A. Mecky Company. From 1931 onward, the most prominent tenant of 1705 W. Allegheny Avenue was the Goodwill Industries of Philadelphia, which occupied the building from 1952 through the 1970s. A 1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows that the building is vacant but that there have otherwise been no changes since the 1925 atlas. The building is currently vacant.

³⁵ 1929 and 1931 Advertisements.

³⁶ Turpin, 153-154.

³⁷ Turpin, 192.

³⁸ 1929 Advertisement.

³⁹ 1924 Advertisement.

⁴⁰ Turpin, 116, 119.

⁴¹ Turpin, 119.

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Name of Property

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In the 1910s and 1920s, the surrounding neighborhood was a mix of two- and three-story brick row houses and scattered low-rise industrial buildings. Although most manufacturing buildings on W. Allegheny Avenue were larger in scale, other comparable properties included the 6-story Reyburn Manufacturing Company located at the northeast corner of N. 23rd Street and W. Allegheny Avenue and the original, 5-story portion of the Steel Heddle Manufacturing Company located at the southwest corner of N. 21st Street and W. Allegheny Avenue.

Figure #2 shows an adjacent and presumably related building immediately west of the nominated property. In reality, this must have just been wishful thinking disguised as self-promotion. Somewhat surprisingly, that lot has been vacant since it first appears on an 1875 Baist Atlas and it remains so to this day (Photograph #8). The lot to the east of the building has been occupied by a Bell Telephone Company Building that dates to c. 1900. It is currently used as a daycare.

Stearns and Castor (1895-1917)

The Philadelphia architecture firm of Stearns and Castor was founded in 1895 by George R. Stearns and Horace W. Castor. The firm, which had a focus in engineering, completed a range of projects from residences, bridges and hospitals, to theaters, religious buildings and factories. Among their more prominent clients were John B. Stetson, the Methodist Hospital of Philadelphia, Horn and Hardart, Lit Brothers, the Free Library of Philadelphia and the Frankford Improvement Company. The firm's most comparable project to the A. Mecky Company factory was an addition to the Harbison Dairies in 1914. It is a similar multi-story brick building with a regular fenestration pattern and stone and terra cotta detailing along the roofline. The firm was dissolved in 1917 over a controversy concerning the design of the Masonic Hall in Elizabethtown, PA but both architects continued to practice independently.

Comparable Juvenile Wheeled Toy Manufacturers in Philadelphia

During the period of significance between 1910 and 1931, there are no comparable manufacturers of children's toys in Philadelphia. There were manufacturers of adult and children's bicycles, such as the Haverford Bicycle Company, but their product lines did not extend to things like wheelbarrows and toys.⁴² There were also manufactures both of toys and baby carriages, but neither expanded outside of their specific niche. The A. Mecky Company was the only one to specifically focus on wheeled toys for children. Their diversification into small home appliances further distinguishes them from all other manufactures in Philadelphia at that time.

⁴² Schwinn did not have a significant manufacturing presence in Philadelphia.

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The Bloch Go-Cart Company is something of a comparable but it falls short of providing a substantial context. However, it was an innovator in the field and was also the largest manufacturer of children's carriages and associated items in Philadelphia in the 1900s through 1920s.⁴³ It did not, however, manufacture any type of bicycle or riding toy. Architecturally, the 4-story building of the Block Go-Cart Company has a slightly larger square footage but its only ornamentation is brick corbels on one portion of one elevation. In contrast, the A. Mecky Company features exterior terra cotta brackets and crenellation, which distinguish it as a notable building. This type of ornamentation served as a kind of public relations for the company. This was not just a place of manufacture but the headquarters of an important company. On the interior, the two buildings are comparable with open spaces bisected by a column grid and exposed finishes.

⁴³ A go-cart is a traditional term for a stroller or baby carriage. Although it is not known why the company elected to use this term, it was not originated by this company, but appears widely used.

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Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Advertisement, 1909, 1914, 1922, 1924, 1928, 1929, 1931.

“Advertisement.” *Motorcycle and Bicycle Illustrated* (7 September 1922): 14

Alphabetical List of Charters of Corporations. Harrisburg, PA: J.L.L. Kuhn, 1917.

Arnold Schwinn & Company. *Fifty Years of Schwinn Built Bicycles: The Story of the Bicycle and Its Contributions to Our Way of Life, 1895-1945*. Chicago: Arnold Schwinn & Company, 1945.

“Concern to Also Manufacture Velocipedes Buys Five Acres.” *The Morning Call* (4 August 1913): 1.

Engineering News 63: 25 (23 June 1910): 275.

“Factory Building for Sale.” *Evening Public Ledger* (27 September 1918): 8.

Fourth Industrial Directory of Pennsylvania. Harrisburg, PA: J.L.L. Kuhn, 1922.

Gruoff, Margaret. *The Mechanical Horse: How the Bicycle Reshaped American Life*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2016.

“John Bing, Sales Manager.” *Hardware Dealers’ Magazine* 42 (July 1914): 1328.

List of Charters of Corporations during the Two Years Beginning June 1, 1903 and Ending May 31, 1905 (Harrisburg, PA: Harrisburg Publishing Co., 1905): 2.

“Local Firm Acquires Philadelphia Juvenile Vehicle Manufactory.” *Rochester Times-Union* (17 March 1931): 8.

“‘Mecko’ Heat and Light Bakers for Skin and Body Treatment.” *Electrical Record and Buyers’ Reference* 25 (April 1919): 245.

“Mecky ‘Twin Bowl’ Toaster Passes the \$1000 Mark on eBay.”

<http://www.oldbike.eu/museum/childrens/1936-velo-king-tricycle-mecky-co/>. Accessed on December 20, 2016.

“1938 Velo-King Tricycle.” <http://www.oldbike.eu/museum/childrens/1936-velo-king-tricycle-mecky-co/>. Accessed on August 29, 2016.

“Philadelphia.” *Hardwood Record* 27:9 (25 February 1909): 36.

A. Mecky Company Building

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Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide 31:9 (1 March 1916): 151.

Second Industrial Directory of Pennsylvania. Harrisburg, PA: William Stanley Ray, 1916.

“Steady Work Assured by Firm Merger.” *Democrat Chronicle* (18 March 1931): 1.

Third Industrial Directory of Pennsylvania Harrisburg, PA: William Stanley Ray, 1919.

Turpin, Robert J., Diss. *Our Best Bet Is the Boy: A Cultural History of Bicycle Marketing*.
Louisville, KY: University of Kentucky, 2013.

“Velocipede.” United States Patent No. 1,563,094 (24 November 1915).

“Walking Pull Toys.” US Trademark No. 252,106 (22 January 1929).

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: Library of Congress

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

A. Mecky Company Building
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Geographical Data

Acreege of Property Less than one acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 18 | Easting: 486524 | Northing: 4428019 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary of the A. Mecky Company Building is shown as a dotted line on the accompanying map entitled "A. Mecky Company Building: National Register Boundary" (Figure #9).

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the entire parcel on which the building is situated and all property historically associated with the nominated property during the period of significance. No extant historically associated resources have been excluded.

A. Mecky Company Building
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10. Form Prepared By

name/title: Logan I. Ferguson, Senior Associate
organization: Powers and Company, Inc.
street & number: 1315 Walnut Street, Suite 1717
city or town: Philadelphia state: PA zip code: 19107
e-mail logan@powersco.net
telephone: (215) 636-0192
date: December 20, 2016

A. Mecky Company Building
Name of Property

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photograph Log

Name of Property: A. Mecky Company Building

City or Vicinity: Philadelphia

County: Philadelphia

State: PA

Photographer: Robert Powers, Powers and Company, Inc.

Date Photographed: August 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction:

<i>Photograph #</i>	<i>Description of Photograph</i>
1.	West and south elevations, view northeast
2.	South elevation, view north
3.	South elevation, Window detail, view north
4.	South elevation, Window detail, view north
5.	South and east elevations, view northwest
6.	Rear lot, view north
7.	North elevation, view southeast
8.	West lot, view west

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Name of Property	County and State
9.	West elevation, view east
10.	1 st floor, view south
11.	1 st floor, view south
12.	1 st floor, view north
13.	2 nd floor, view northeast
14.	3 rd floor, view east
15.	3 rd floor, Fire balcony, view east
16.	4 th floor, view southeast
17.	4 th floor, view north
18.	4 th floor, view east
19.	4 th floor, Freight elevator, view west
20.	4 th floor, Stairway, view south
21.	4 th floor, Stairway, view northwest
22.	5 th floor, Stairway, view north
23.	5 th floor, view northeast
24.	5 th floor, view northwest

Index of Figures:

<i>Figure #</i>	<i>Description of Figure</i>
1.	Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1916.
2.	A. Mecky Company Letterhead.
3.	Bromley Atlas, 1925.
4.	Velo-King Advertisement, 1926.
5.	Velocipede, US Patent No. 1,563,094, November 24, 1915.
6.	Velo-King Walking Pull-Toy Label and Sambo, 1928.
7.	Mecko Light and Heat Baker Advertisement, 1919.
8.	Existing Plans with Photograph Key
9.	Existing Site Plan with National Register Boundary

A. Mecky Company Building
Name of Property

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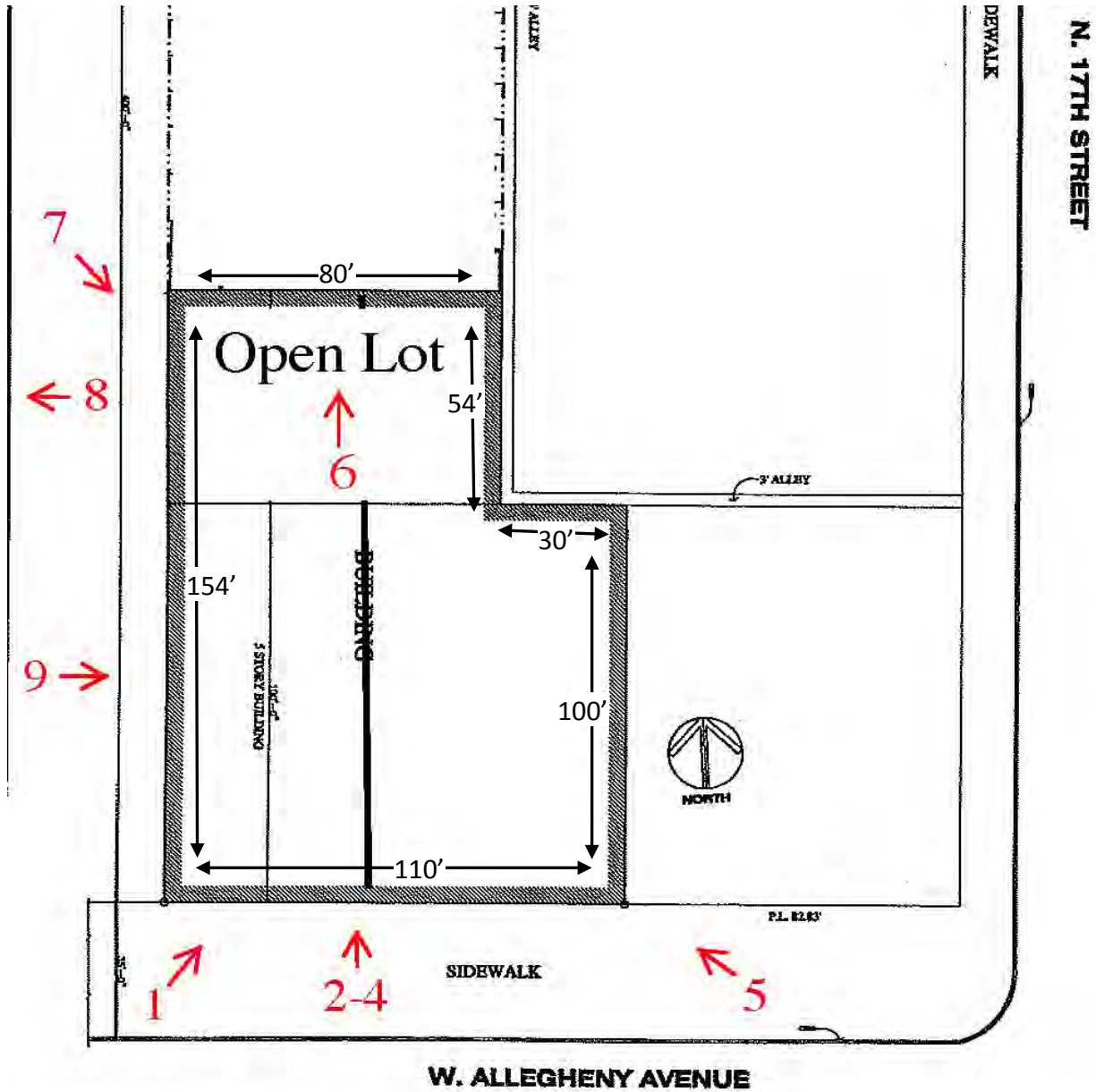
Figure 9 – Existing Site Plan with National Register Boundary

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

A. Mecky Company Building
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Existing Site Plan with Photograph Key

The building measures 110'0" to the east/west and 100'0" to the north/south.

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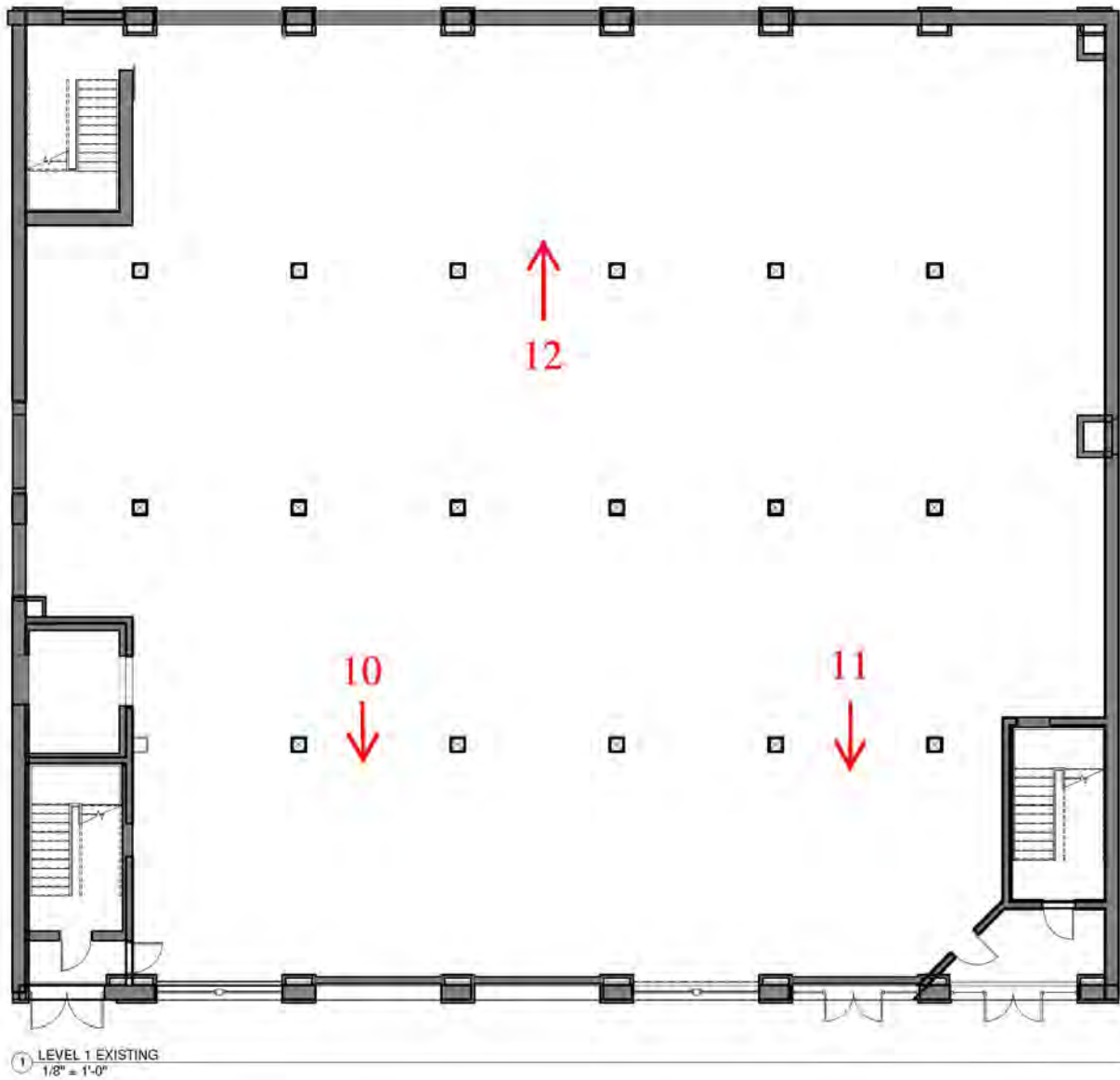
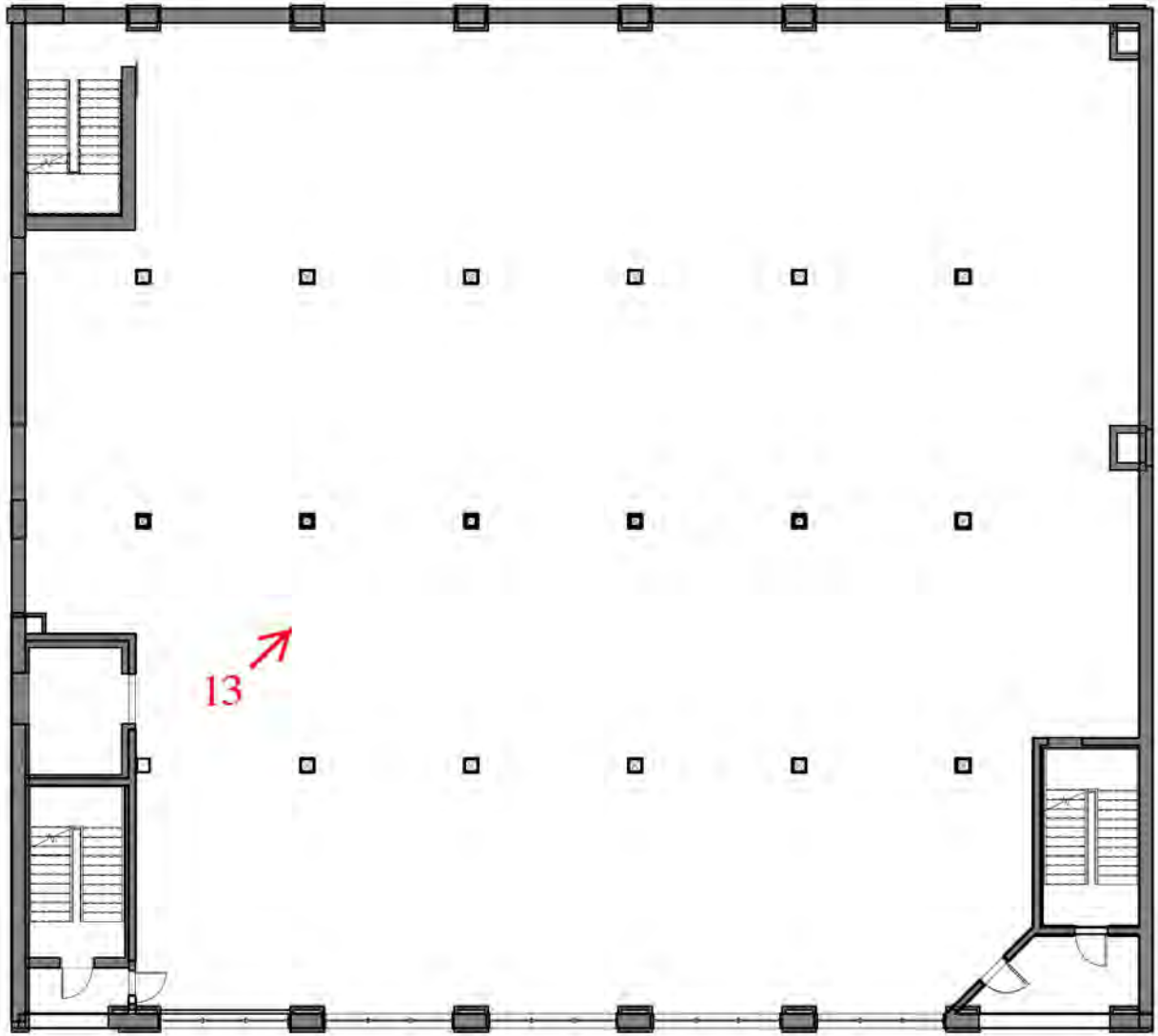


Figure 8 – Existing Plans with Photograph Key

A. Mecky Company Building
Name of Property

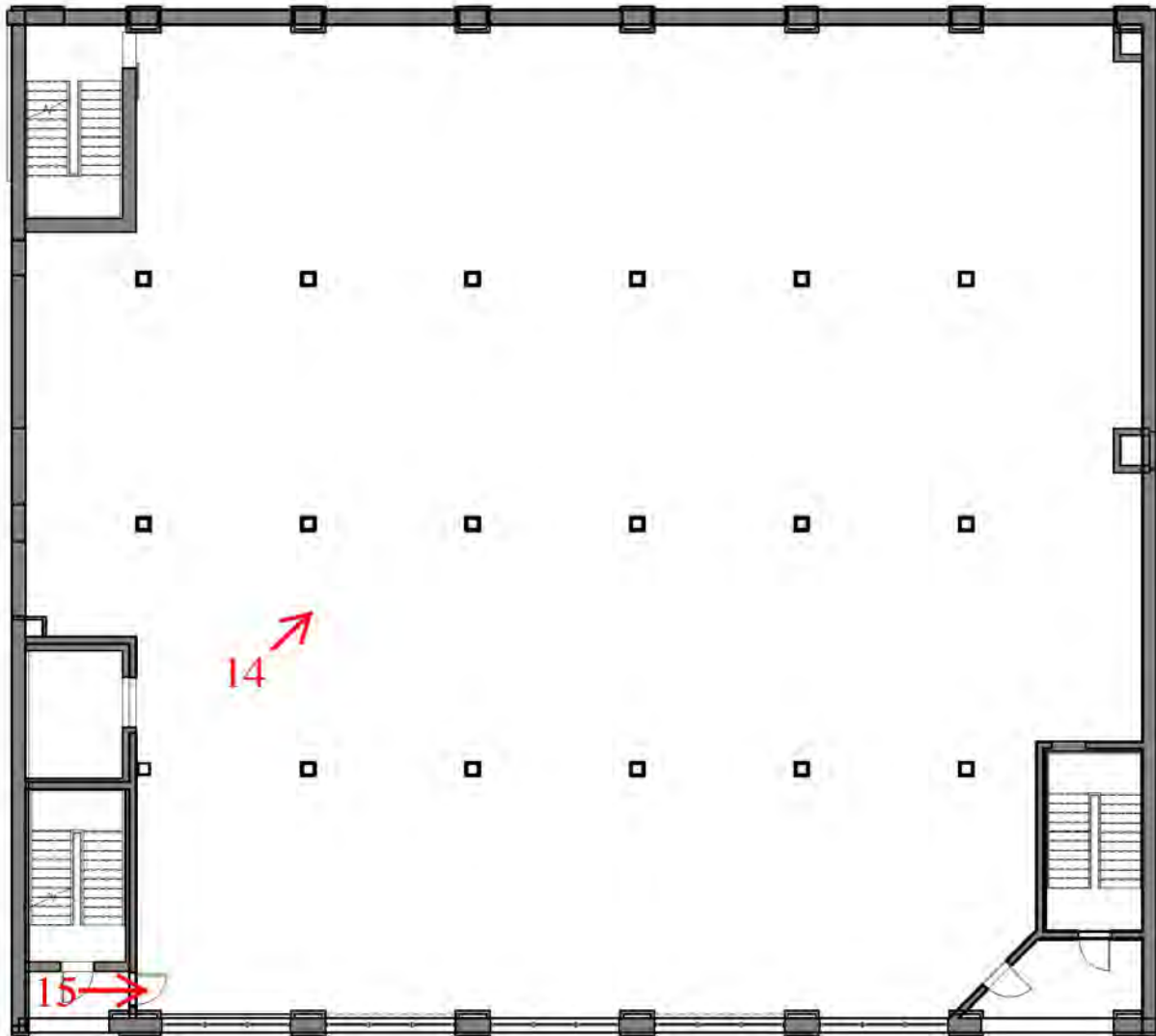
Philadelphia County, PA
County and State



2 LEVEL 2 EXISTING
1/8" = 1'-0"

A. Mecky Company Building
Name of Property

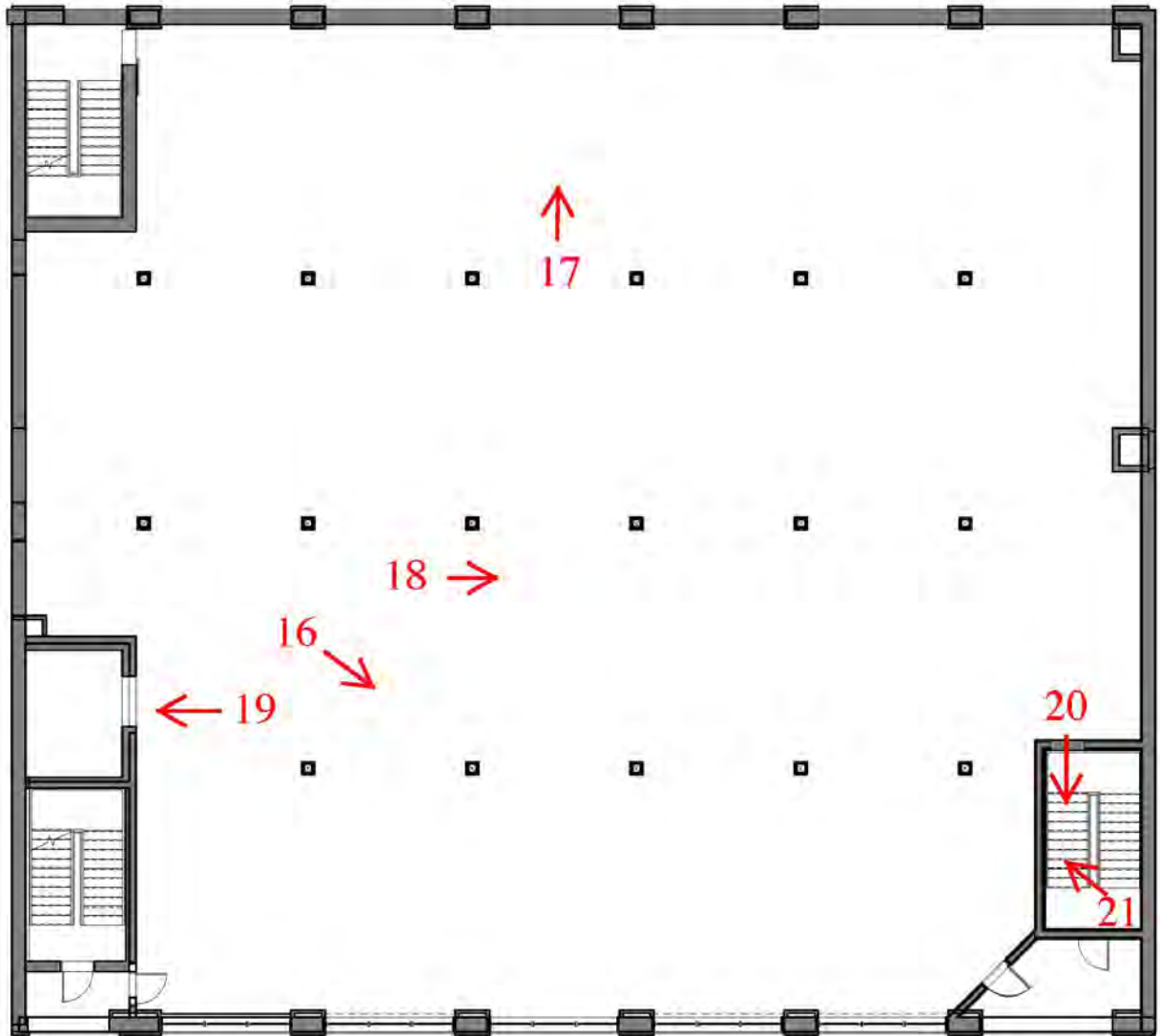
Philadelphia County, PA
County and State



① LEVEL 3 EXISTING
1/8" = 1'-0"

A. Mecky Company Building
Name of Property

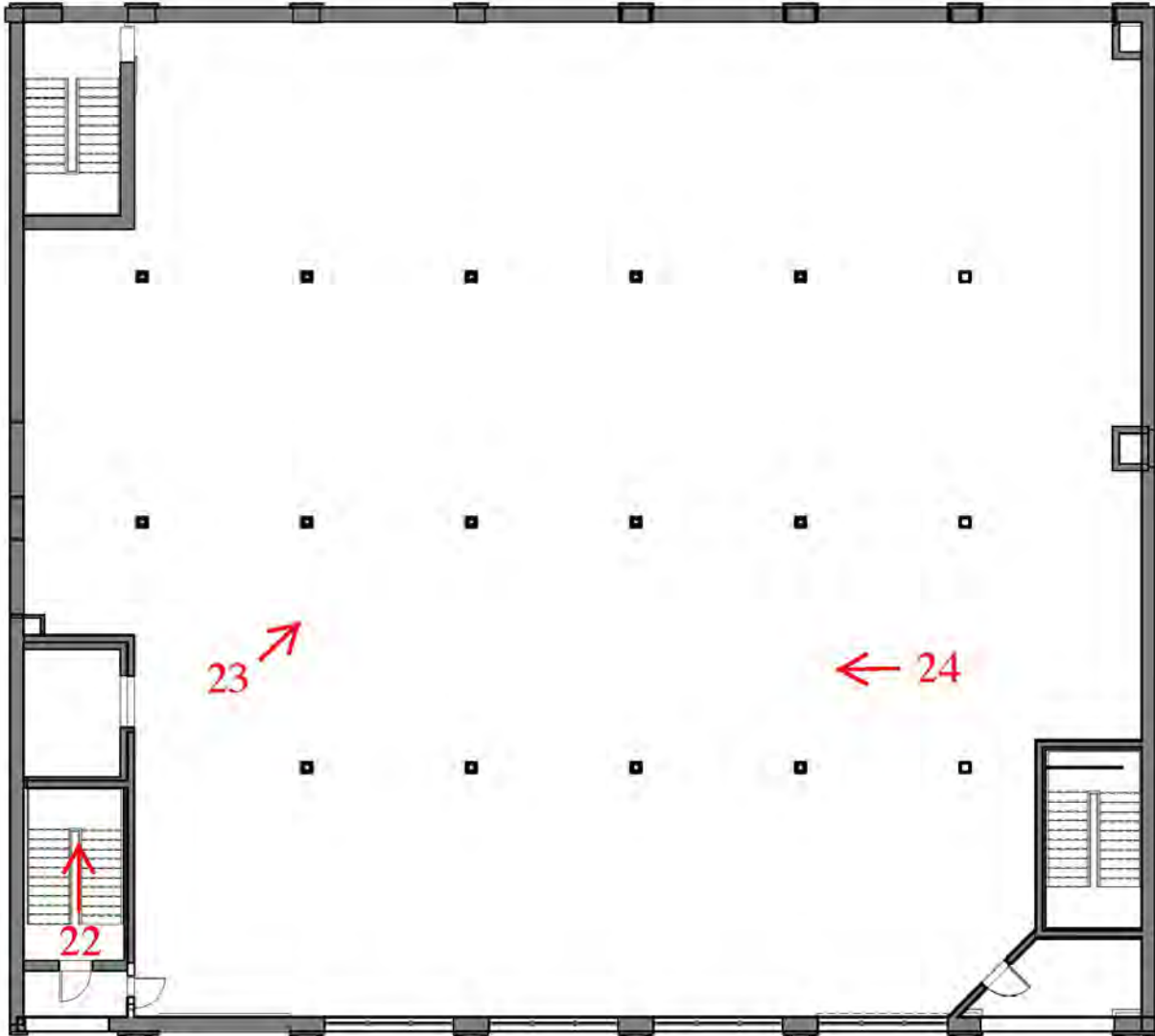
Philadelphia County, PA
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② LEVEL 4 EXISTING
1/8" = 1'-0"

A. Mecky Company Building
Name of Property

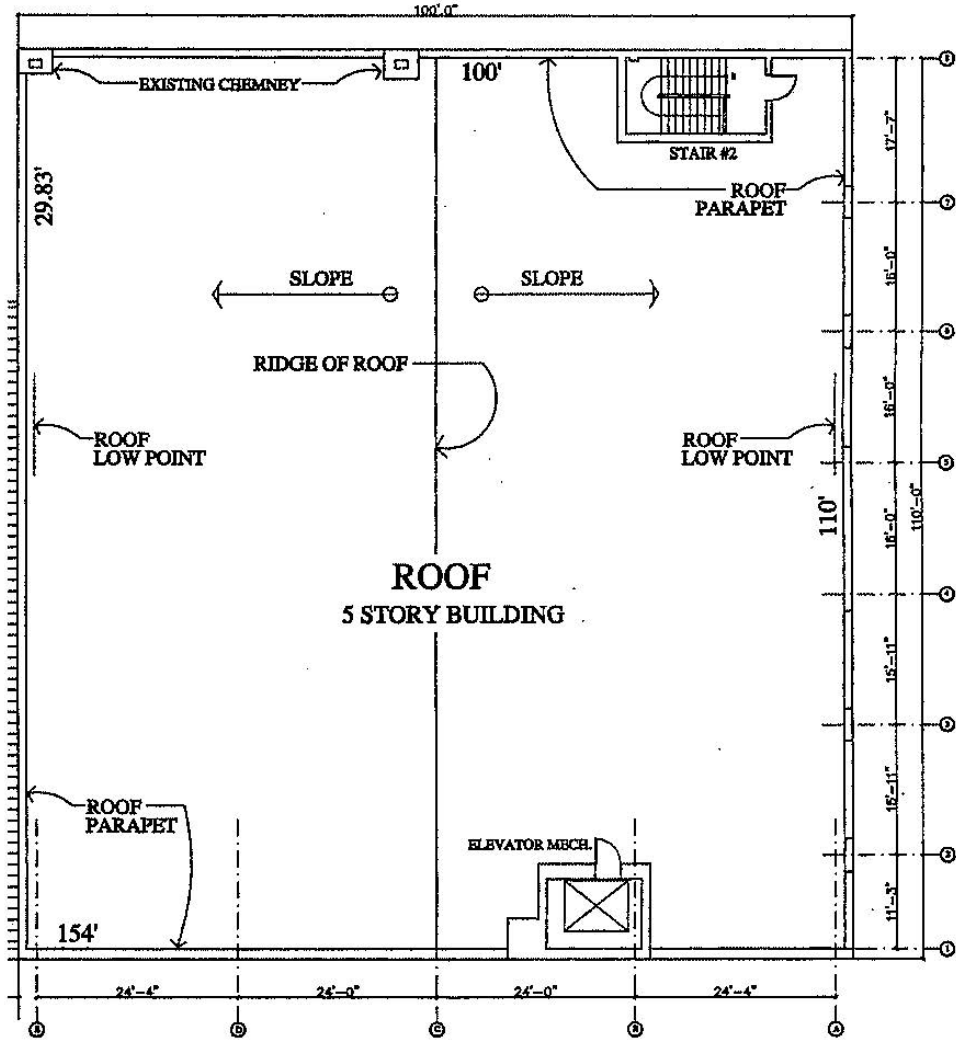
Philadelphia County, PA
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① LEVEL 5 EXISTING
1/8" = 1'-0"

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Existing Roof Plan

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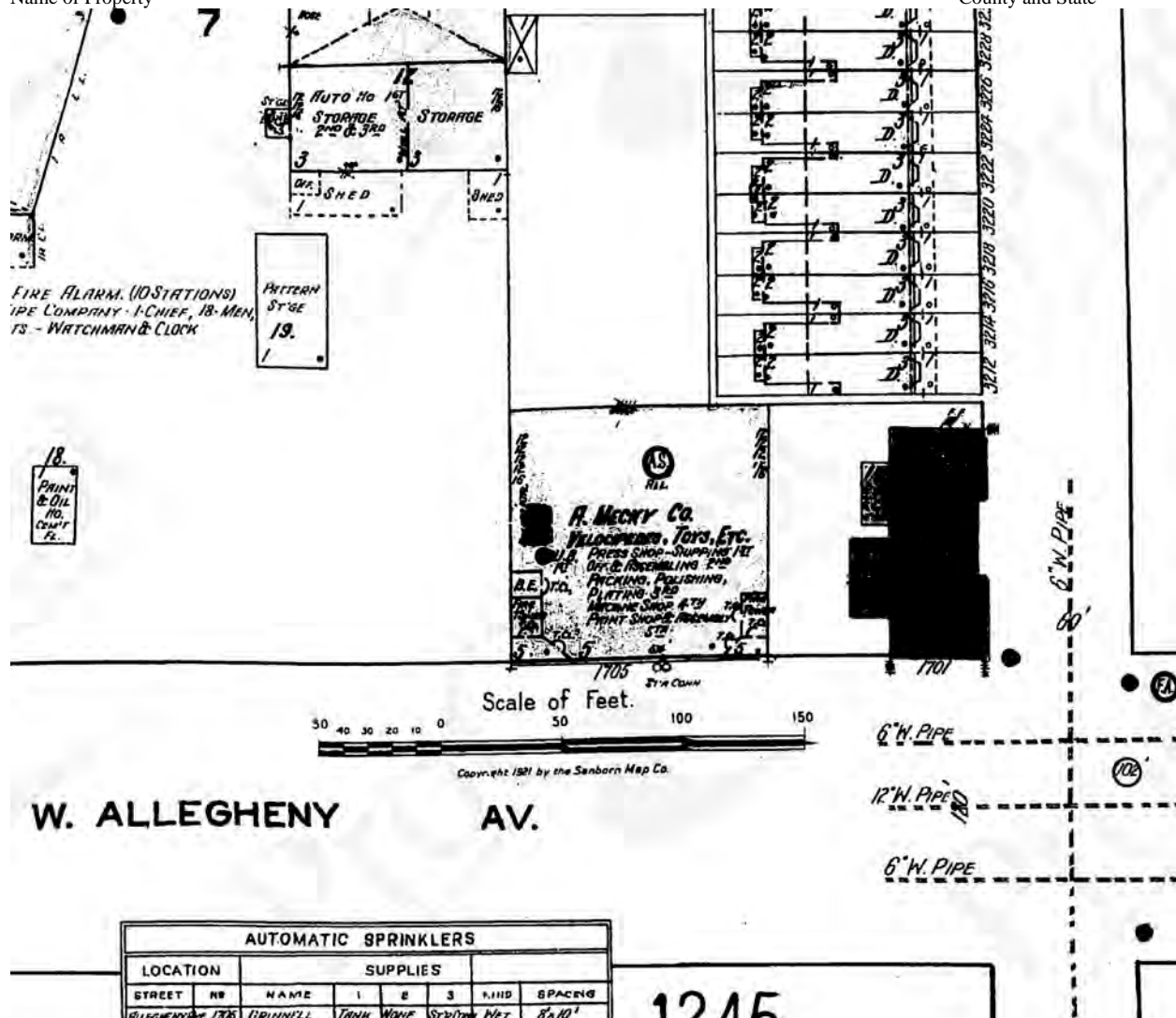


Figure 1 – Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1916.

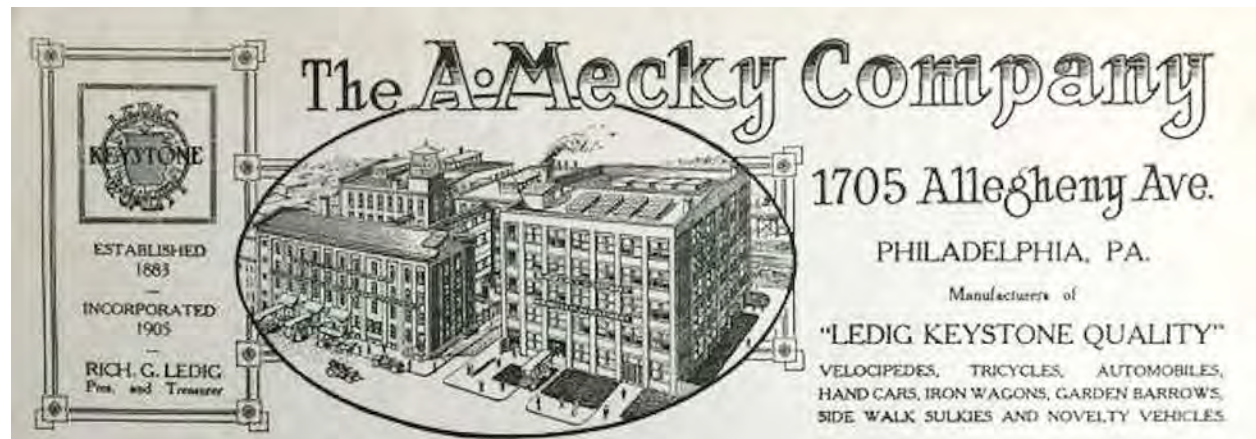


Figure 2 – A. Mecky Company Letterhead.

A. Mecky Company Building
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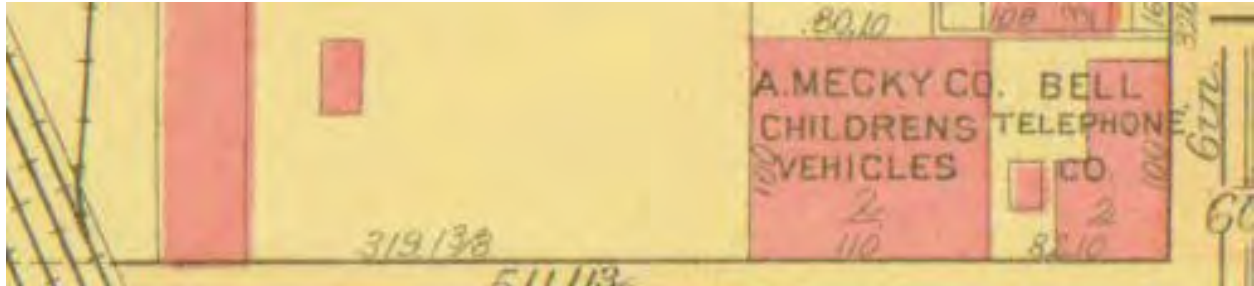



Figure 3 – Bromley Atlas, 1925.



VELO-KING

VEHICLES *for* CHILDREN

*The Toy Fair's Center of Interest
Is Room 316---at the Hotel Breslin*

Here you will find a complete display of the famous Velo-King Juvenile Vehicles—Velocipedes, Scooter Cycles, Scooters, Tot Bikes—each one of them representing the very best in construction and finish.

Buyers—from Pennsylvania to the Pacific—know that these good-looking, well-made vehicles are best sellers the year round and a most dependable source of profit.

Be sure to drop in at 316. We'll be glad to see you, and we're sure you will be glad to have seen us.

A. MECKY COMPANY
1705 Allegheny Ave.
PHILADELPHIA
PENNA.

Figure 4 – Velo-King Advertisement, 1926.

A. Mecky Company Building
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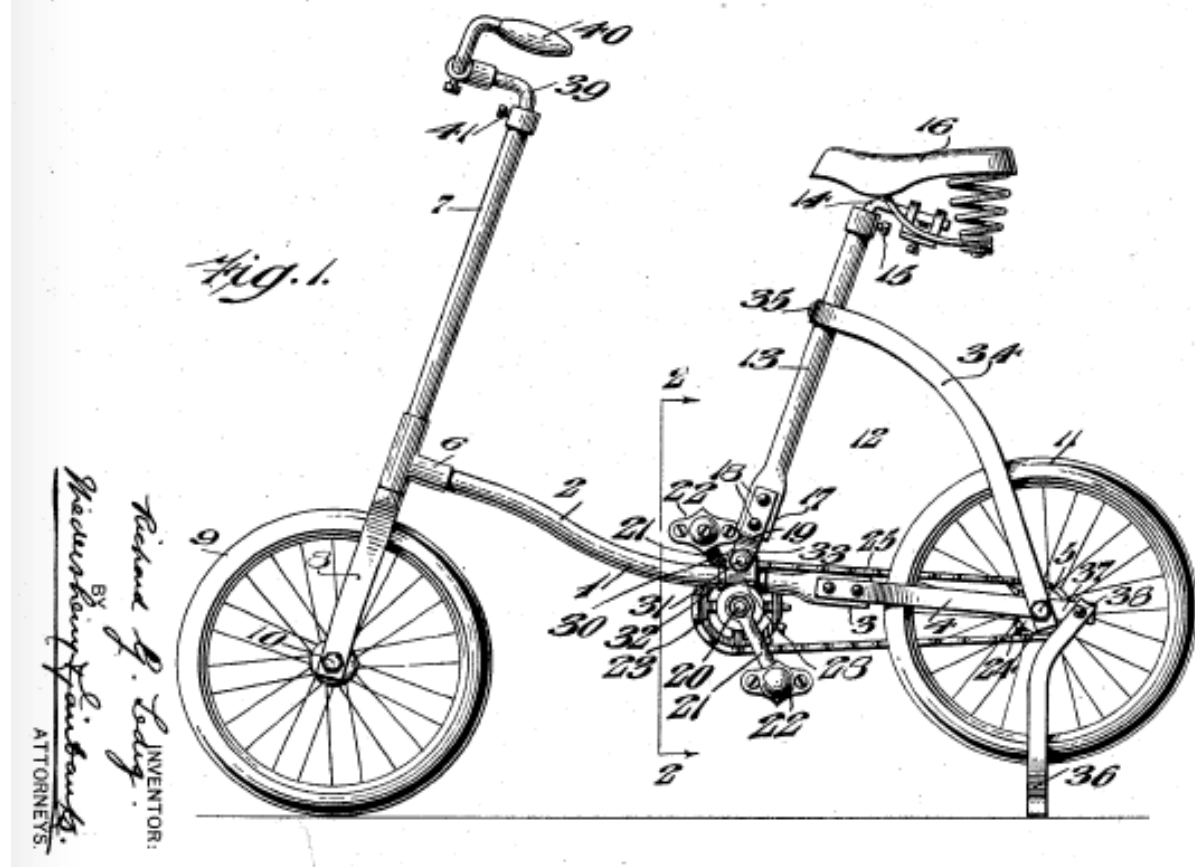


Figure 5 – Velocipede, US Patent No. 1,563,094, November 24, 1915.

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Figure 6 – Velo-King Walking Pull-Toy Label and Sambo, 1928.

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New and Improved Apparatus for Heat and Light Therapy in Hospitals

THE constantly increasing use of light and heat in therapeutics has demonstrated that improvements in equipment for such treatment have failed to keep pace with the interest displayed by hospitals. The

MECKO

LIGHT AND HEAT BAKER

overcomes many usual disadvantages of older apparatus and simplifies the mechanics of treatment.

It is moderate in cost.

Unit equipment permits adaptation of outfit to needs of both small and large hospitals.

Thorough comfort for patient in treating any part.

Maximum therapeutic effect.

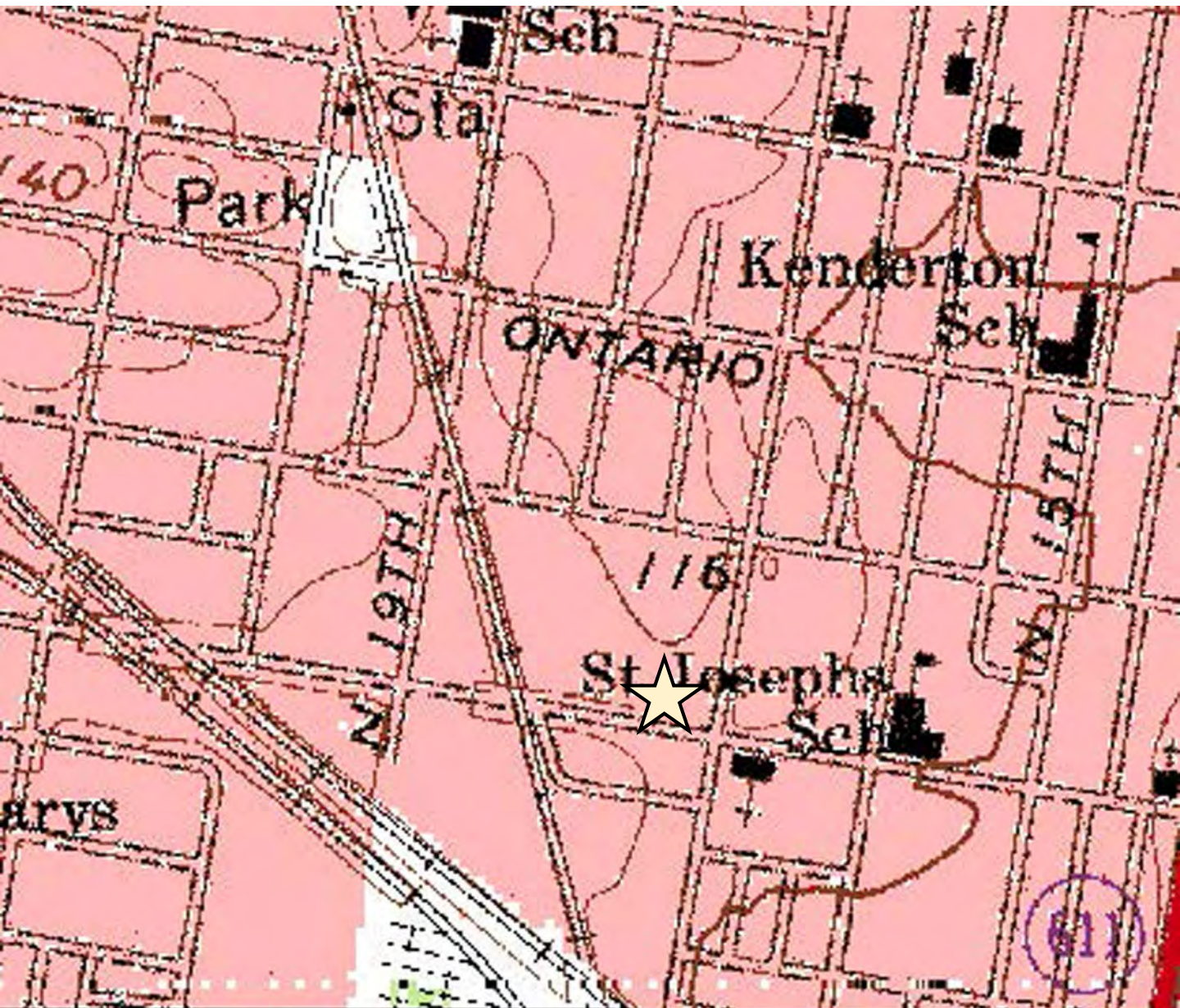
Sold in unit form. Equipment may include one or more units. A single unit is sufficient for many small hospitals; complete Baker performs efficiently the work of expensive special apparatus.

Write for booklet.

THE A. MECKY CO
Richard G. Ledig, Pres.
1705 Allegheny Ave.,
Philadelphia,
Pa.

Figure 7 – Mecko Light and Heat Baker Advertisement, 1919.

National Register of Historic Places nomination
A. Mecky Company Building
USGS Map



1705 W. Allegheny Ave., Philadelphia County, PA
UTM Reference: 18/486524/4428019
Quadrangle: Germantown
Pennsylvania





SPEED LIMIT
30







TLC



















NO
SMOKING









Oh, everybody, let's all
And keep Goodell here a

EXIT











UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: Date of Pending List: Date of 16th Day: Date of 45th Day: Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Edson Beall Discipline Historian

Telephone _____ Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL
COMMISSION

1515 Arch Street, 13th Floor
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102
Tel: 215.686.7660

Robert Thomas, AIA
Chair

Jonathan E. Farnham, Ph.D.
Executive Director

19 January 2017

David Maher
PA State Historic Preservation Office
400 North Street, Second Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0093

Re: 1705 W Allegheny Avenue, A. Mecky Company Building

Dear Mr. Maher:

I am writing in response to your request that the Philadelphia Historical Commission provide its official Certified Local Government recommendations on the nomination proposing to add the A. Mecky Company building, located at 1705 W Allegheny Avenue in Philadelphia to the National Register of Historic Places. At its monthly public meeting on 13 January 2017, the Philadelphia Historical Commission reviewed and discussed the nomination and accepted public testimony. The Commission agreed that the building satisfies National Register Criterion A, in the area of industry, and recommended that the building be added to the National Register of Historic Places. The Commission contends that the resource retains sufficient integrity to be added to the National Register. Commissioners were excited to see this kind of investment in this part of the City. The likelihood that this nomination is intended for historic rehabilitation tax credit purposes was also discussed, and the Commissioners were in support of that opportunity. Thank you for providing the Philadelphia Historical Commission with the opportunity to comment on this nomination.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jon Farnham", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jonathan E. Farnham, Ph.D.
Executive Director



Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office
PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION



March 22, 2017

J. Paul Loether, Deputy Keeper and Chief
National Register and National Historic Landmark Program
National Register of Historic Places
U.S. Department of the Interior
National Park Service
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, NW, 8th floor
Washington D.C. 20005

Re: NR nomination discs

Dear Mr. Loether:

The following nomination form is being submitted electronically per the "Guidance on How to Submit a Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places on Disk Summary (5/06/2013)":

- A. Mecky Company Building, Philadelphia County

The enclosed discs contain the true and correct copy of the nomination for the A. Mecky Company Building. The proposed actions are for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

If you have any questions regarding the nominations please contact David Maher at 717-783-9918.

Sincerely,

David Maher
National Register section
Preservation Services