

56-1910

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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: Boyertown Burial Casket Company

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: 401 W. 4th Street

City or town: East Greenville State: PA County: Montgomery

Not For Publication: N/A Vicinity: N/A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

Applicable National Register Criteria:

 X A B C D

<u>Andrew J. Donald</u>	<u>11/2/2017</u>
Signature of certifying official/Title:	
Date	
<u>Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission – State Historic Preservation Office</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	
In my opinion, the property <u> </u> meets <u> </u> 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:) _____

Patrick Andrews

Signature of the Keeper

12/21/2017

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
District
Site
Structure
Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>3</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>3</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.)

INDUSTRIAL – Manufacturing Facility

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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

Description Summary Paragraph

The Boyertown Burial Casket Company stands at 401 W. 4th Street in downtown East Greenville, PA. The 1-, 3- and 5 ½-story red brick, contributing building was constructed in c.1880 with large additions in 1919, c.1922, and c.1925. Despite the phased construction, the consistency of building material, design and detailing give the building a unified appearance. There are also two contributing, freestanding, buildings within the boundary that were constructed during the period of significance; a c.1942, 2-story, brick building that was most likely associated with the Company's lumber staging area at the north of the property, and a c. 1955 truck garage. The Boyertown Burial Casket Company retains all seven aspects of integrity, as both the overall form and defining industrial characteristics remain intact.

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.)

The Boyertown Burial Casket Company is located on a lot bounded by West 4th St. to the south, the Perkiomen Branch of the Reading Railway line to the west and recreational and open fields owned by the Upper Perkiomen School District, to the north and east (Photograph #10). All of the contributing standing structures are found in the southern half of the property. The northern half of

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the property, now largely overgrown with trees and shrubs, was the historic lumber storage area, as seen in historic Sanborn maps and aerials (Figures #5, 6, 7, & 8).

The surrounding neighborhood primarily contains 2-story, late 19th and early 20th century residential buildings. The majority of commercial buildings in the town are located along Main Street (Route 29), which runs north-south and is located six blocks to the east of the subject property. There are also industrial buildings directly to the west and south, adjacent to the rail line.

The main building has an irregular footprint and was constructed in three phases (see Building Chronology). The first section was constructed in c. 1880. The 3-story, narrow, rectangular building is oriented north-south and is located in the center of the site. In 1919, a 5 ½-story, L-shaped building was constructed abutting the south end of the original building. A 1-story, rectangular boiler house and engine room was also constructed at the north end of the west elevation of the original building.

In c. 1922, a 1-story, rectangular, brick dry kiln was constructed abutting the north elevation of the boiler house and engine room. Sometime around 1970, this structure appears to have been repurposed as a garage with the addition of overhead garage doors on the east and west elevations. A dry kiln hopper/mixer can still be seen, beneath heavy vegetation, at the northwest corner of the structure (Photographs #6 & 7).

In c. 1925, two more sections were constructed. A 5 ½-story, rectangular building was constructed abutting the south end of the east elevation of the original building. A 1-story, rectangular boiler house extension was constructed abutting the west elevation of the boiler house and engine room.

All sections have a gabled roofline, with the exception of the c.1922 kiln/garage addition, which has a flat roof. There are 1-story brick penthouses on the north and west elevations of the 5 ½-story 1919 addition and on the north elevation of the 5 ½-story c. 1925 addition. There is also a tall brick chimney on the south elevation of the boiler house and engine room and a short chimney on the roof of the c. 1925 boiler house.

The c. 1880 building is fifteen bays wide on the east and west elevations and two bays wide on the north elevation (Photographs #5-9). Brick pilasters separate the bays and each bay is topped with brick corbels. All window openings have painted wood sills and segmental arched brick heads. In general, the original 12/12 double-hung wood windows remain throughout the east and west elevations, although some openings have been infilled with contemporary materials, such as plywood and cinderblock. The north elevation has larger window openings, which contain tripartite 12/12 double-hung wood windows with corrugated metal over the openings. On the 1st floor, the

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easternmost bay contains a large vehicular opening. There is also an open metal fire escape in the center of the east elevation. The south elevation entirely abuts the 1919 addition.

The 5 ½-story, 1919 addition is seven bays wide on the north elevation, six bays wide on the west elevation, ten bays wide on the south elevation and four bays wide on the east elevation (Photographs #1, 2, 8, and 10). There is a rusticated brownstone base on all elevations. All window openings have stone sills and 16-light metal windows with centered 8-light horizontal pivoting sections. There is a projecting brick stair tower near the center of the south elevation, which has single-leaf metal doors and small metal balconies to the east. On the 1st floor, the west elevation has a series of large vehicular openings with garage-style metal doors (Photographs #10). The west end of the south elevation has a large elevated entrance opening, which is accessed by a metal platform and located below a suspended corrugated metal canopy (Photographs #1 and 2). A second large suspended corrugated metal canopy is located on the 1st floor of the east elevation (Photograph #2).

The 1-story, 1919 drying room has two window openings at the east end of the north elevation, which contain 16-light metal windows with centered 8-light horizontal pivoting sections, which flank a single-leaf wood door (Photograph #8). At the west end of the elevation opening is a window opening with an segmental arched brick head that that has been infilled with brick. The west elevation has several large openings that have been infilled with cinderblock. The south and east elevations have no openings.

The 1-story, 1919 boiler house is not visible other than its chimney, mentioned above (Photograph #9).

The 5 ½-story c. 1925 addition is eighteen bays wide on the north and south elevations and three bays wide on the east elevation (Photographs #3 and 4). There is shallow brick corbel along the roofline. The building is a stone base, stone window sills and prominent stone window heads. In the basement, the bays contain 12-light metal windows and the upper floors contain 16-light metal windows with centered 8-light horizontal pivoting sections on all elevations. The west elevation has no openings. In the center of the south elevation, there is an elevated, contemporary single-leaf metal door with a 1-light metal sidelight and a stone head on the 1st floor. The entrance is accessed by a contemporary open metal stairway. There is a projecting brick stair tower in the center of the east elevation, which has 12-light metal windows with centered 6-light horizontal pivoting sections, stone sills and prominent stone heads. On the 1st floor of the north elevation, there is a 1-story brick projection at the east end and a wide entrance opening with a stone lintel at the west end (Photograph #4).

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The 1-story, c. 1925 boiler house is three bays wide on the exposed west and south elevations (Photograph #9). On the west elevation, the window openings have been infilled with cinderblock but the stone sills and prominent stone heads remain. On the south elevation, the outer bays contain 16-light metal windows with centered 8-light horizontal pivoting sections and the center bay contains a single-leaf replacement metal door with a stone lintel.

To the northeast of the main building are two contributing, stand alone, buildings that were built along the eastern property boundary line. The northern building is a square 2-story, red brick building that dates to c.1942, when it first appears on historic aerial images (Figure #7). The building is completely overgrown but appears to have a gable roof with ends on the east and west elevations (Photograph #28). The north elevation appears to lack windows or doors, while the east elevation has at least one window opening that has been covered with plywood. On the southern elevation, there are two 2nd story windows, with one window and one man-door on the ground floor. There also appears to be two, ground floor windows on the west elevation, with one, centered, opening on the 2nd story. Given this building's proximity to the historic lumber staging area, seen on Sanborn and historic aerial images, at the northern end of the nominated property, this building most likely played a role in the preliminary casket manufacturing steps of raw material sorting and preparation.

The southern building is a 2-story, T-shaped painted cinderblock garage that appears to date to c.1955, and is first known to appear on the property in a 1958 historic aerial image (Figure #8). The west elevation has four, tall, metal garage-style doors, in varying states of deterioration, with a painted cinderblock surround (Photograph #25). The garage doors all face west, toward the rear portion of the main building, creating what could be described as the rear "yard" of the industrial site (seen in Figure #2). A c.1940 photo of one of the Boyertown Burial Casket Company delivery trucks helps understand the need for tall garage doors on what was most likely a truck garage (Figure #10). The north and east elevations are largely overgrown but the exposed portions are clad in cinderblock with an irregular fenestration pattern containing large openings covered in corrugated metal and multi-light steel windows (Photograph #26). The south elevation only has two openings at the east end, which are covered with plywood (Photograph #27). The building's location also allows the trucks easy access to loading docks on the northern elevation of the 5-story c.1925 wing, and access to what appears to have been a driveway from the interior "yard" to West 4th St.

Interior

The interior of the building has three stairways and three freight elevators. The 1919 addition has an internal straight-run wood stairway near the center of the west elevation and an exterior U-return wood stair tower in the center of the south elevation (Photographs #13 and 21). The c. 1925 addition has an exterior U-return wood stair tower in the center of the east elevation. The 1919

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addition also has a freight elevator in the center of the west elevation and near the northeast corner. The c. 1925 addition has one freight elevator near the center of the north elevation (Photographs #12 and 22-24). All circulation provides access to all floors.

On the interior of the building, each building campaign is clearly delineated by painted brick walls and metal fire doors. The floor areas within each section, however, are primarily open, and the finishes are consistent throughout and are original to the building (Photographs #11-24). In most sections, the floor plates are bisected by a row of painted cast iron and wood columns. In the 3- and 5 ½-story buildings, the existing finishes include wood floors, painted and unpainted brick walls, painted and unpainted wood ceiling joists and ceilings and exposed lighting and mechanicals.

The 1919 drying room is open in plan with a wood floor, exposed painted brick walls and exposed metal ceiling trusses (see Photograph #14). The interior of the 1919 boiler house was not accessible at the time of survey. The interior of the c. 1925 boiler house is open in plan with a concrete floor, exposed painted brick walls, exposed metal ceiling trusses and much of the original machinery (see Photographs #15). The c.1922 dry kiln/c.1970 garage is open in plan with a concrete floor, exposed painted brick walls and an exposed metal ceiling.

Because of the continued industrial use of the building, there is no visible evidence of either the machinery or processes of either the cigar manufactory or the Boyertown Burial Casket Company, other than in the c. 1925 boiler house. Further, there is no particular, physical indication of the way in which any company utilized the building or how its operation may have been adapted by the Boyertown Burial Casket Company after the departure of the cigar manufacturer and the East Greenville Manufacturing Company.

Integrity

The Boyertown Burial Casket Company retains all seven aspects of integrity. Both the overall form and the defining industrial characteristics remain, including its brick masonry sections, brick detailing, regular window openings, wood and cast iron columns, exposed wood flooring and ceiling systems and exposed masonry walls. While occasional window openings have been replaced or infilled, these newer elements do not detract from the overall appearance and the original fenestration patterns remain clearly visible. The quality, placement and condition of the construction materials, as well as the vernacular architectural style are both highly characteristic of the period and also all remain wholly intact.

The main building remains intact from the last phase of major construction in c. 1925 with no demolition or significant new construction. On the interior of the main building, all of the workspaces and finishes remain similarly intact. Although the machinery was removed in the late 20th century, the overall arrangements and volumes sufficiently relate to the function of the spaces.

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The function of the property, as a manufacturing and storage facility, also continues to the present time.

The location and setting remain intact since the initial construction, particularly the ongoing presence of the railway line, which was such an impetus for construction. 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 periodic building campaigns effectively relay the sense of place and the notable industrial history of once prominent manufacturers.

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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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1919 – 1962

Significant Dates

1919
C. 1922
C. 1925

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

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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.)

Criterion A: Significance in Industry

The Boyertown Burial Casket Company has local significance under Criterion A, Industry, as the first prominent factory building in East Greenville that was directly related to the arrival of the railroad in the region and for its subsequent use by two prominent local companies that directly relate to the two waves of industrial development in East Greenville. As the largest employer in town in the early and mid-20th century, the company manufactured bronze, metallic and hardwood burial caskets, along with associated funeral items. Not only was it a unique industry for the county but it was also unique as a casket company, as it manufactured the complete casket, from raw lumber to the finished lining. Although the East Greenville branch was the secondary outpost to the Boyertown factory, it is both significant as part of the larger whole and also as the only extant factory remaining that was related to the Boyertown Burial Casket Company, as the Boyertown complex was demolished in 1988. The period of significance begins in 1919, when the Boyertown Burial Casket Company purchased the property, and ends in 1962, when the company was consolidated at the Boyertown, PA headquarters location, and closed the East Greenville, PA site.

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

A Brief History of Manufacturing in East Greenville

The borough of East Greenville was created out of 180 acres from Upper Hanover Township and incorporated as of September 6, 1875.¹ Prior to incorporation, the area had approximately fifty residential buildings but, after incorporation, Henry H. Dotts actively developed the town, creating separate building lots, laying out streets and bringing in commercial and retail opportunities.²

That same year, the Perkiomen Railroad, which followed Perkiomen Creek, was extended to the town, giving “new life to commercial enterprises in the vicinity of these stations and [inspiring] the establishment of new businesses along the rail corridor”, firmly shifting East Greenville from an

¹ Theodore Webber Bean, ed., *History of Montgomery County, Pennsylvania* (Everts and Peck, Philadelphia, 1884): 719.

² Bean, 720.

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agricultural to an industrial economy.³ This is affirmed by the population totals, which were 331 residents in 1870 and 1,235 residents in 1910.⁴

In Upper Greenville, this early industry was focused around cigars and the borough was known as one of the “cigar-making towns of the Upper Perkiomen Valley”, along with Pennsburg and Red Hill.⁵ Although cigar manufacturing appeared in East Greenville as early as 1860, it was not until after “the Borough had become a railroad town” that business boomed.⁶ In the late 1870s and early 1880s, the town had 120 residents involved in cigar manufacturing with an annual output of 9 million cigars.⁷

It was this industry, and the scale at which it operated, which shifted the local economy from a primarily agricultural to a primarily industrial one. It has been speculated that the “trade-oriented” German immigrants who initially settled Upper Hanover Township were particularly suited to the “semi-skilled, handmade cigar process.”⁸

Although cigars were the “mainstay” of local industry and the “chief economic activity in the [Perkiomen] valley”, cigar manufacturing was also found throughout the eastern portion of the state along the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad lines.⁹ Beginning in the 1870s, “manufacturers readily recognized the advantages of setting up factories in such isolated communities under conditions so conducive to profitability.”¹⁰

By the end of the 19th century and into the 20th century, the industrial scope of East Greenville expanded to include such business as the Columbia Silk Mill and Hillegrass Box Factory, as well as additional prominent cigar manufacturers, such as Otto Eisenlohr and Bro., which combined to employ a total of more than 550 people.¹¹

³ “Perkiomen Railroad.” *Historic Resource Survey Form* (2003): 3.

⁴ East Greenville, Pennsylvania.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Greenville,_Pennsylvania. Accessed on May 24, 2017.

⁵ Patricia Anne Cooper, *Once a Cigar Maker* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1987): 200.

⁶ *Upper Hanover and the Three Boroughs: Pennsburg, East Greenville and Red Hill*, np.

⁷ Bean, 720.

⁸ “Upper Perkiomen Valley Draft Regional Comprehensive Plan.”

<http://www.montcopa.org/DocumentCenter/View/2137>. Accessed on May 24, 2017, 6; Cooper, 161.

⁹ *Upper Hanover and the Three Boroughs: Pennsburg, East Greenville and Red Hill*, np, Cooper, 200;

“Upper Perkiomen Valley Draft Regional Comprehensive Plan.”

<http://www.montcopa.org/DocumentCenter/View/2137>. Accessed on May 24, 2017, 1. In East Greenville, its location between Philadelphia and Allentown was a huge benefit.

¹⁰ Cooper 200.

¹¹ *The Seventh Annual Report of the Commissioner of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1912* (Harrisburg, PA: Wm. Stanley Ray, 1914): 191.

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The cigar industry continued to thrive in East Greenville until 1921 when a series of labor strikes essentially bankrupted the various operations.

A Brief History of the Boyertown Burial Casket Company

The Boyertown Burial Casket Company was incorporated on March 25, 1893 with a capital of \$20,000 for the “manufacturer of funeral supplies.”¹² Daniel Brumback and Henry B. Wagner were local undertakers in Boyertown who relied on outside companies to manufacture and deliver their caskets. After regular delays in casket deliveries, which therefore delayed the funerals, they decided to go into business for themselves, along with Milton Mory, who was a local bank officer.¹³ Charles A. Mory, Milton’s brother, was a fabric manufacturer and was also involved early on. The company distinguished itself by using expensive wood and interior fabric liners, which was quickly noticed, leading to their caskets being shipped around the state, beginning in 1895. In 1896, the company opened a sales room and distribution center and, by the early 20th century, had sales offices in New York City, Philadelphia, Los Angeles and Columbus, OH.¹⁴ There was also another manufacturing branch in Topton, PA.¹⁵ Each of these factories had approximately 100 employees in the mid-20th century.¹⁶

By this time, the company was the second largest casket manufacturer in the country, making 60,000 caskets per year and was the first publicly traded casket company on the New York and Philadelphia stock exchanges.¹⁷ A 1934 article from the *Pottstown Mercury* stated that, “the Boyertown Burial Casket Company has an output which reaches the far corners of the world. Noted persons, including royalty of Europe, have been buried in caskets made here.”¹⁸ These celebrities included Princess Alphonse of Portugal, Dr. Sun Yat Sen, the first president and founding father of the Republic of China, William Jennings Bryan, Vladimir Lenin, Will Rogers, Liberace, Robert Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe.¹⁹ Harry Houdini was also partial to their bronze caskets for his magic shows, performing his famous experiment where he stayed at the bottom of a hotel swimming pool for an hour and a half without a visible way of obtaining air in one. Houdini

¹² *Alphabetical List of Charters of Corporations* (Harrisburg, PA: Wm. Stanley Ray, 1893) :23. A casket is rectangular in shape and is usually of a higher quality material and a higher level of workmanship. A coffin is tapered at the foot and wider at the head. It is usually also of a more economical design.

¹³ “Residents Hear History of Boyertown Burial Casket Co.” *Berksmont News* (7 May 2009): np.

¹⁴ In 1907, the company built a new sales room and distribution center in Philadelphia at 1211-1221 Arch Street, which was designed by the Philadelphia firm of Ballinger and Perrot. It has been demolished. The Columbus branch opened in 1924 and the Los Angeles branch was established in the 1940s.

¹⁵ The Topton branch was established in 1916.

¹⁶ “Casket Board Elects Morey to 10th Term.” *Pottstown Mercury* (8 December 1934): 12.

¹⁷ Michelle Park, “Former Boyertown Burial Casket Co. to Get a State Historical Marker.” *Reading Eagle*, 25 May 2009: np. The National Casket Company of Boston was the largest.

¹⁸ “Casket Board Elects Morey to 10th Term.”

¹⁹ Margaret Harner, “Boyertown Burial Casket Company.” <http://boyertown150.com/tag/casket/>. Accessed on May 24, 2017.

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also chose this same coffin, which was of cast bronze with an “inner hermetically sealing bronze casket liner equipped with an oval plan glass top” to be buried in.²⁰

In the 1940s through the 1980s, the company continued at a similar pace and engaged in the manufacture of similar products. The Boyertown plant closed in 1988 and the entire factory complex was demolished shortly thereafter.

Products of the Boyertown Burial Casket Company

The Boyertown Burial Casket Company specialized in the manufacture of hardwood caskets, such as mahogany, oak, poplar, walnut and cherry; cloth-covered softwood caskets; metal caskets, such as steel, zinc, copper, cast iron, bronze and bronze-plated; “hardware and undertakers supplies” and “robes and linings.”²¹ One of the few companies in the country to offer this range, the company was particularly proud of its bronze caskets, as it was one of only three companies in the country to manufacture them.²² In order to confirm the durability of bronze, one period advertisement showed their bronze casket next to a bronze vessel from 1766 B.C.E.²³ Although the company does not specifically distinguish which products were manufactured in which of its branches, a description of the functions of the East Greenville branch make it possible to assume that they specialized in the comprehensive manufacture of hardwood and cloth-covered softwood caskets.²⁴

The Boyertown Burial Casket Company was unique among comparable manufacturers when it was founded in that it manufactured the entire casket, rather than making a portion of the casket, such as the liner, and then shipping that item to a separate manufacturer. As can be seen on the 1922 Sanborn Fire Insurance map for the East Greenville branch, there was a large lumber shed to contain the raw materials, dry kilns and a drying room to cure the wood, a mill room for shaping the wood, a bench room for assembling the caskets and lids, finishing rooms for varnishing, polishing and sewing of the liners and storage rooms to contain the finished products before they were shipped out (Figure #5).

This comprehensive manufacturing process in East Greenville was initially made possible by the immediate proximity of the railway line, which allowed for the easy delivery of raw materials, such as lumber, and the immediate transport of the finished product. An important reason why the site was initially selected, the railway facilitated the entire operation and allowed the East Greenville

²⁰ “Who Had the Most Expensive Caskets? <https://disqus.com/by/kimrintling/>. Accessed on May 24, 2017.

²¹ Period advertisements.

²² The other two were the York Casket Company in York, PA and the National Casket Company of Boston.

²³ Period advertisement.

²⁴ A 1992 Sanborn Fire Insurance map for the Boyertown site shows that it contained a foundry, which the East Greenville site did not. This makes it possible to assume that the metal caskets were primarily produced there.

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branch not only to operate in conjunction with the main Boyertown factory but also with the salesrooms in Philadelphia, New York, Columbus, OH and Los Angeles. Because of this national reach, the company's main slogan from the mid-20th century onward was "coast to coast."

In addition to the caskets, the company also offered associated funeral items, such as pedestals made of brass tubing that could be used to decorate the receiving room.

During World War II, the company was fortunate in that demand was unfortunately high and materials weren't aggressively restricted. Although all manufacture of metal caskets was prohibited, the company was able to continually manufacture wood caskets during this period.²⁵

Casket manufacturing began in the United States at a noticeable scale in the mid-19th century. Prior to this formal manufacture, caskets were made by local lumberyards or furniture stores and funerals were managed by the family. The funeral industry, as we know it today, did not exist. In 1900, W.P. Hohenschuh wrote *The Modern Funeral: Its Management*, which shifted the emphasis away from the family orbit and toward providing loved ones with the most luxurious experience possible. Hohenschuh proclaimed that, "there is nothing too good for the dead" and "casket manufacturers touted their products with tag-lines proclaiming comfort, durability, beauty and craftsmanship. Caskets quickly evolved from plain wooden boxes to decorative polished boxes with satin cloth interiors."²⁶ There was also the arrival of "magnificent showrooms", which were established by the manufacturers in urban centers, typically away from their factories and allowed funeral directors to bring their customers to see the final product in person.²⁷

The Boyertown Burial Casket Company had showrooms in Philadelphia, New York and Los Angeles, which were located in buildings specifically built by the company for this purpose. It also, somewhat aggressively, capitalized on the sentimentality of the process with period advertisement stating things like,

The very ultimate in luxury and protection... When love for the departed transcends all else... The choice of this exquisite casket represents the supreme tribute of love for the departed. The fullest measure of value has inspired this design, which transcends any thought of price consideration. The result is a casket, which expresses the epitome of love, and gives ageless protection throughout the years.²⁸

One of the best ways to understand the products of the company and the role that those products played in the industry is to examine their patents. The company obtained over ten patents,

²⁵ Harner.

²⁶ W.P. Hohenschuh, *The Modern Funeral: Its Management* (Chicago: The Trade Periodical Company, 1900): 119; "York Casket Company." *National Register Nomination* (2008): 8:5.

²⁷ Hohenschuh, 119.

²⁸ Period advertisements.

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including one for a basic wood casket; one for a metal casket, which, unlike other versions that were mitred and soldered at the corners, was strengthened at the corners and made of a more flexible metal to bend around the odd angles of the casket design; and several that pertained to the comprehensive seal between the base and the lid.²⁹ The company also developed patents that involved manufacturing techniques, including one for a sander, which provided a way to sand large wooden pieces that are not level, by having multi-station rotating carriages.³⁰

A Brief History of the East Greenville Branch of the Boyertown Burial Casket Company

In c. 1880, shortly after the arrival of the railroad in East Greenville, a 3-story brick building was constructed parallel to the railway line and between it and Railroad Street. Constructed as a cigar factory, it was likely associated with the Dimmig family, which was the first to establish a formal cigar industry in East Greenville and ultimately had several associated businesses in town. According to the first several Annual Reports of the Factory Inspector of the Commonwealth published, the only industrial enterprises in town in the 1890s were “J.L. Dimmig and Brother” and “A.J. Dimmig.” A.J. Dimmig is routinely listed as having more employees, so it is possible to assume that this is the company first associated with the subject property.

Around 1910, the Dimmig companies consolidated their operations with an office building on Main Street and a factory on Jefferson Street, both in East Greenville. In 1911, the East Greenville Manufacturing Company moved into the building. Incorporated on August 30, 1911 with a capital of \$60,000, they specialized in the “manufacture and sale of washing machines, red cedar chests, woodenware, kitchen and household goods and novelties.”³¹ Although this company had a range of products that seem neither particularly compatible with each other nor the former use of the building, the large, open floor plates and ample lighting meant that the subject property was easily converted from one industrial use to another.

In November 1918, the Boyertown Burial Casket Company bought the plant and equipment of the East Greenville Manufacturing Company, with the intention of opening in January of the new year.³² The purchase was the “result of a desire for expansion on the part of the casket company.”³³ Part of the appeal of the building, in addition to its flexible industrial use, was both its proximity to the railway line and an adjacent empty lot, which the company purchased simultaneously.³⁴ In

²⁹ “Casket.” US Patent # 68,124, 1 September 1925; “Burial Casket.” US Patent # 2,003,096. 28 May 1935; “Casket Gasket.” US Patent #3,461,517, 19 August 1959; “Casket Closure and Sealing Device.” US Patent #2,889,609, 9 June 1959.

³⁰ “Swell Sander.” US Patent #3,479,772. 25 November 1969.

³¹ *Alphabetical List of Charters of Corporations* (Harrisburg, PA: Wm. Stanley Ray, 1913) :72.

³² “Casket Company Buys Plant at East Greenville.” *The Central News* (20 November 1918): 3.

³³ “Casket Company Buys Plant at East Greenville.” The company already had one branch factory in Topton, PA (demolished).

³⁴ “Casket Company Buys Plant at East Greenville.”

Boyertown Burial Casket Company

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1919, the company completed the L-shaped addition, with the acknowledgment that the empty lot would be constructed on in the near future. Although constructed of a similar red brick, the addition is clearly a 20th century one, with steel instead of wood windows and stone instead of wood sills. But the overall massive, streamlined design and regular window openings maintain the same overall aesthetic.

A 1922 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map clearly shows the distinct operations of the building (Figure #5). In the c. 1880 building, the 1st floor was used as a mill; the 2nd floor was used as a mill and bench room; and the 3rd floor was used as a bench room. In the 5 ½-story, 1919 addition, the 1st floor was used for storage; the 2nd floor was used for storage and finishing, including varnishing, polishing and sewing; the 3rd floor was used for finishing; and the 4th and 5th floors were used for storage. The 1-story, 1919 addition was used as a drying room and a pine box room. At the north end of the west elevation of the c. 1880 building is a 1-story boiler house and engine room, which also date to 1919. To the west of the engine and boiler house is a second engine room, which was never built. To the north of the building is an attached dry kiln and lumber shed and a freestanding dry kiln to the north (demolished). At this time, the company had eighty-seven employees.³⁵ These are the same functions shown on comparable Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of the Boyertown factory. As such, it is possible to assume that the two branches operated similarly with the same type of output, but East Greenville was merely on a smaller scale.

In c. 1925, the company expanded on the empty lot with a 5 ½-story addition to the east. Although the exact functions of this building are not known, the company had no shift in operations or product lines, so it is possible to assume that the functions were comparable to those shown on the 1922 Sanborn map. A boiler house extension, similar to the one shown on the 1922 Sanborn map was also constructed. Like the 1919 addition, this one is also of matching red brick, but has a stone instead of a brownstone base and prominent stone window heads. The overall massive, window configuration and regular fenestration pattern continue to allow the building to read as consistent parts of a whole. After the new addition was construction, the company had 170 employees, making it the “largest branch of the company” at that time.³⁶

In 1962, the East Greenville branch of the Boyertown Burial Casket Company closed to “consolidate its operations” at the original Boyertown site.³⁷ In c. 1970, the dry kiln and lumber shed were modified into a 1-story garage at the north end of the building. In the late 20th century, SOS Products occupied the building and continues to operate in a portion of the building until the current time.

³⁵ *Fourth Industrial Directory of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1922* (Harrisburgh, PA: J.L.K. Kuhn, 1922): 1051.

³⁶ *Labor and Industry* 19 (1930): 74; “Casket Board Elects Morey to 10th Term”; “Casket Company Cuts Wage Rate.” *The Morning Call* (28 April 1931): 22.

³⁷ “Hotel, Casket Firm Going Under Hammer.” *The Morning Call* (5 March 1963): 9.

Boyertown Burial Casket Company
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Comparable Manufacturers in East Greenville and Comparable Casket Manufacturers

From the time of its arrival in East Greenville, the Boyertown Burial Casket Company was the largest employer in town. However, the three other largest employers during the period of significance were the Columbia Silk Mills, the Dimmig Cigar Manufacturing Company and the Otto Eisenlohr and Brother Company. In 1922, the Boyertown Burial Casket Company had eighty-seven employees; Otto Eisenlohr and Bro. had sixty-two employees; the Columbia Silk Mills had fifty-two employees; and the Dimmig Cigar Factory had thirty-three employees.³⁸ It is also both the physically largest and tallest building in the town, dominating the landscape.

Although there are no local comparables in the field of casket manufacturing, the York Casket Company in York, PA (NR 2008) provides a relevant context. Like the Boyertown Burial Casket Company, the York Casket Company was a unique industry in York County and was responsible for the entire manufacturing process from raw lumber to final product. It also specialized in a similar range of products, including hardwood, cloth-covered softwood and metal caskets. The York Casket Company, was a considerably younger company, having not been founded until 1932 and was so aware of the competition with the Boyertown Burial Casket Company that it hired W.L. Rhodes, the former superintendent of the Boyertown Burial Casket Company to run their operations.³⁹ While it was larger than the East Greenville branch of the Boyertown Burial Casket Company, with 271 employees in 1956, it was smaller than the total force of the entire company in both locations, which had nearly 550 employees total that same year.⁴⁰

Another Pennsylvania casket company was the Excelsior Coffin and Casket Works, which was founded in Pittsburgh in 1864. Ultimately known as the National Casket Company, the business was an early manufacturer of mass-produced caskets and peaked in the early 20th century, making over 52,000 per year.⁴¹ The company not only had a similar product line to the Boyertown Burial Casket Company, including “wood and metal caskets, casket hardware and burial garments,” but also patented a number of different designs, which influenced coffin manufacturing for decades.⁴² The company left Pittsburgh in the late 20th century.

³⁸ *Fourth Industrial Directory of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1922*: 1051.

³⁹ “York Casket Company”, 8:2. The York Casket Company was one of between 250 and 300 casket factories that opened in Pennsylvania between 1932 and 1934.

⁴⁰ “York Casket Company”, 8:6.

⁴¹ “History.” <http://www.cardellobuilding.com/history/>. Accessed on October 18, 2017.

⁴² *The Story of Pottsburgh, Volume I* (Pittsburgh, PA: First National Bank of Pittsburgh, August 1919): np.

Boyertown Burial Casket Company
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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Alphabetical List of Charters of Corporations. Harrisburg, PA: Wm. Stanley Ray, 1913.

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“Casket Company Cuts Wage Rate.” *The Morning Call* (28 April 1931): 22.

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Lynch, Michelle Napoletano. "Boyertown's foundation forged on iron" *Reading Eagle*, May 8, 2016. Accessed August 28, 2017. <http://www.readingeagle.com/news/article/foundation-forged-on-iron#.WaXTQfOGPOM>.

Park, Michelle. "Former Boyertown Burial Casket Co. to Get a State Historical Marker." *Reading Eagle*, 25 May 2009: np.

"Perkiomen Railroad." *Historic Resource Survey Form*, 2003.

"Residents Hear History of Boyertown Burial Casket Co." *Berksmont News* (7 May 2009): np.

The Seventh Annual Report of the Commissioner of Health for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, 1912. Harrisburg, PA: Wm. Stanley Ray, 1914.

The Story of Pottsburgh, Volume I (Pittsburgh, PA: First National Bank of Pittsburgh, August 1919): np.

"Swell Sander." US Patent #3,479,772. 25 November 1969.

Upper Hanover and the Three Boroughs: Pennsburg, East Greenville and Red Hill.
<http://www.montcopa.org/DocumentCenter/View/2137>. Accessed on May 24, 2017.

"Who Had the Most Expensive Caskets?" <https://disqus.com/by/kimrintling/>. Accessed on May 24, 2017.

"York Casket Company." *National Register Nomination* (2008): 8:5.

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

Boyertown Burial Casket Company
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10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 2.56 acres

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: 40.406619 | Longitude: -75.507784 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 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 Boyertown Burial Casket Company is illustrated as a red line on the accompanying USGS map, and reflects the overall boundary and measurements of Montgomery County, PA tax parcel PARID: 06-00-03032-00-4 as it appeared in 2017 in the Montgomery County Property Records Search, available online at <http://propertyrecords.montcopa.org>. The property is divided into two tracts, with a Railroad Ave. right-of-way running north-south through the middle of the parcel.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nominated property includes the entire parcel on which the historic industrial operations of the Boyertown Burial Casket Company were located during the period of significance. No extant historically associated resources have been excluded. There is currently no evidence that shows that the parcel has changed size and dimensions since the Boyertown Burial Casket Company purchased the property in 1919.

Boyertown Burial Casket Company
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Logan I. Ferguson, Senior Associate (and PA SHPO staff, 717-783-8947)
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: August 14, 2017

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.

Boyertown Burial Casket Company
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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: Boyertown Burial Casket Company
City or Vicinity: East Greenville County: Montgomery State: PA
Photographer: Robert Powers, Powers and Company, Inc.
Date Photographed: May 2017

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

<i>Photograph #</i>	<i>Description of Photograph</i>
1.	South elevation, view northeast
2.	South and east elevations, view northwest
3.	South and east elevations, view northwest
4.	East and north elevations, view southwest
5.	East and north elevations, view southwest
6.	North elevation, view south
7.	North and west elevations, view southeast
8.	North and west elevations, view southeast
9.	West and south elevations, view northeast
10.	West elevation, view northeast
11.	C. 1880 building, 1 st floor, view south

Boyertown Burial Casket Company

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12.	1919 addition, 1 st floor, view west
13.	1919 addition, 1 st floor, Stairway, view west
14.	1919 addition, Drying Room, 1 st floor, view north
15.	C. 1925 addition, Boiler House, 1 st floor, view north
16.	C. 1880 building, 2 nd floor, view south
17.	C. 1925 addition, 2 nd floor, view east
18.	C. 1880 building, 3 rd floor, view north
19.	C. 1925 addition, 3 rd floor, view west
20.	C. 1925 addition, 4 th floor, view northeast
21.	1919 addition, 4 th floor, Stairway, view west
22.	1919 building, 5 th floor, view west
23.	1919 building, 5 th floor, Freight elevator, view northwest
24.	C. 1925 addition, 5 th floor, view east
25.	Southern c. 1955 building, West elevation, view east
26.	Southern c. 1955 building, North and east elevations, view southwest
27.	Southern c. 1955 building, South elevation, view north
28.	Northern c. 1942 building, North and east elevations, view southwest

Index of Figures:

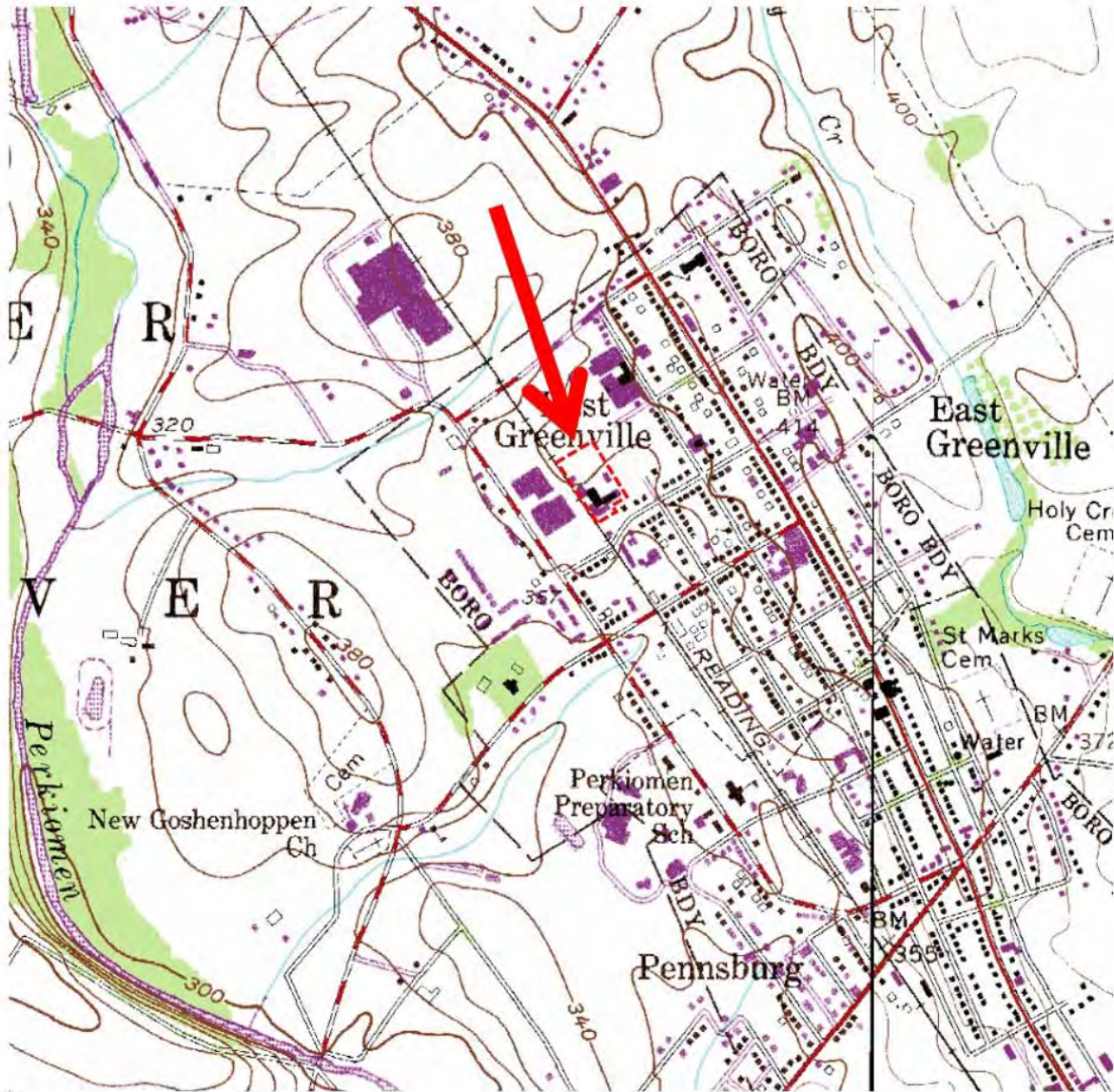
Figure #	Description of Figure
1.	Bird's Eye aerial photograph w/ NR boundary, south view. https://www.bing.com/maps . Accessed on August 28, 2017.
2.	Bird's Eye aerial photograph w/ NR boundary, west view. https://www.bing.com/maps . Accessed on August 28, 2017.
3.	Existing Plans with Photograph Keys
4.	Property Chronology and Site Plan
5.	Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922.
6.	Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1930.
7.	Aerial Photograph, 1942. http://www.pennpilot.psu.edu/ . Accessed on August 14, 2017.
8.	Aerial Photograph, 1958. http://www.pennpilot.psu.edu/ . Accessed on August 14, 2017.
9.	Aerial Photograph, 1971. http://www.pennpilot.psu.edu/ . Accessed on August 14, 2017.
10.	Boyertown Burial Casket Company, Boyertown, PA. Delivery truck and mechanic Eddie Bechtel, c.1940. Michelle Park, "Fomer Boyertown Burial Casket Co. to Get a State Marker." <i>Reading Eagle</i> (25 May 2009): np.
11.	Boyertown Burial Casket Company, Boyertown, PA. Aerial image, c.1900. Michelle Park, "Fomer Boyertown Burial Casket Co. to Get a State Marker." <i>Reading Eagle</i> (25 May 2009): np.

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Boyertown Burial Casket Company
National Register of Historic Places

Montgomery County, Pennsylvania
USGS Map



Quad: East Greenville

Lat: 40.406619

Long: -75.507784

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Figure 1 – Bird’s Eye aerial photograph w/ NR boundary, south view. <https://www.bing.com/maps>. Accessed on August 28, 2017.

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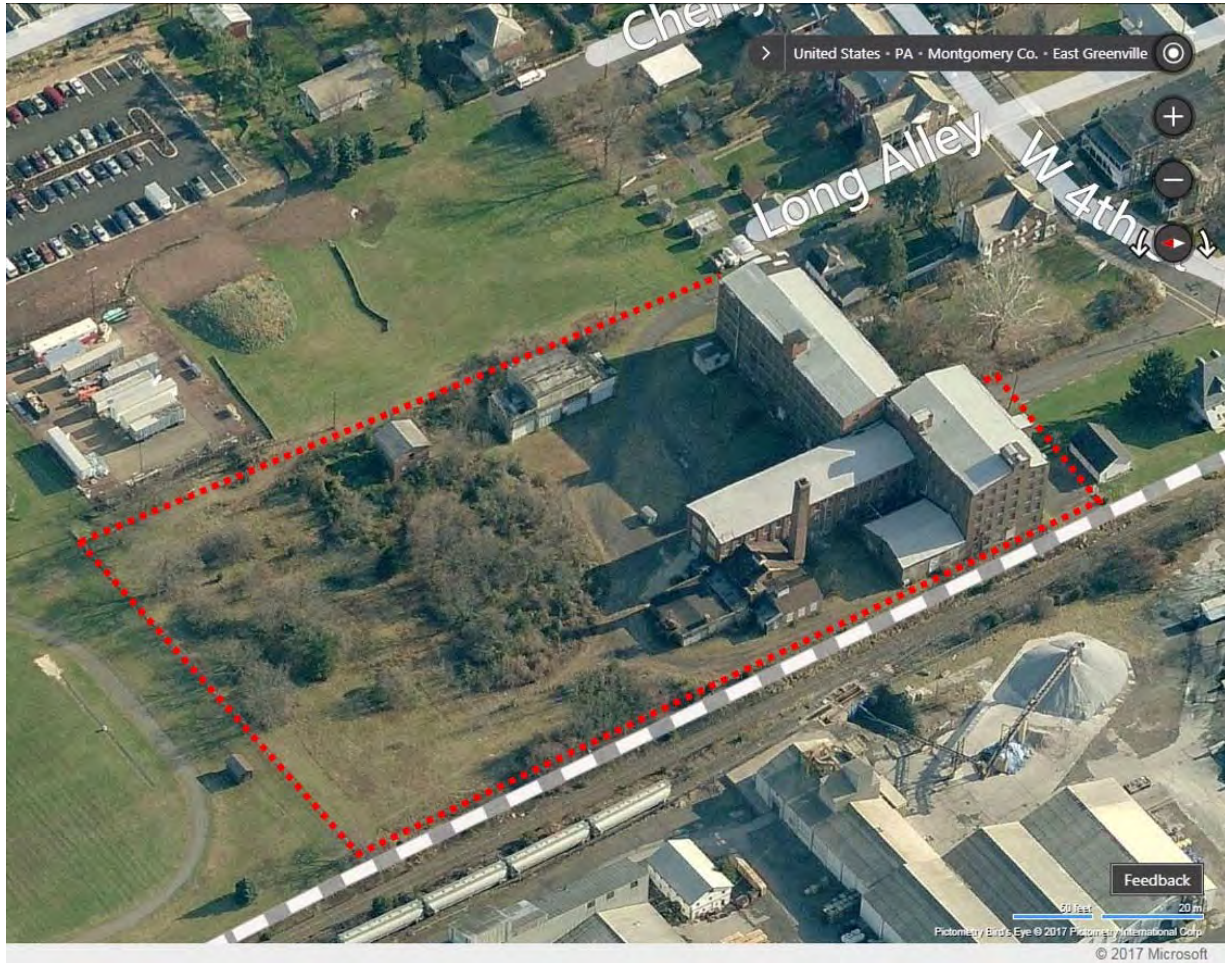
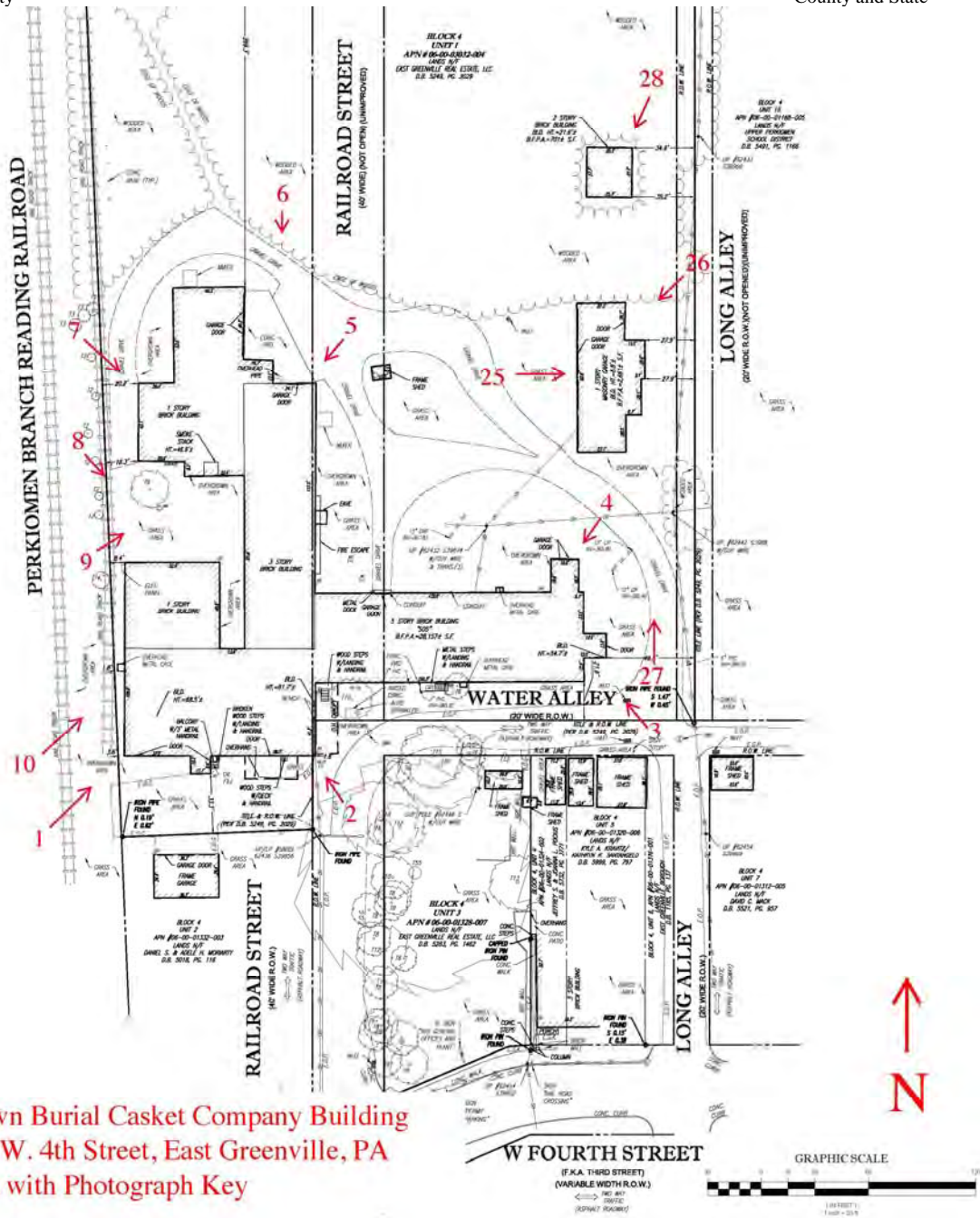


Figure 2 – Bird’s Eye aerial photograph w/ NR boundary, west view. <https://www.bing.com/maps>. Accessed on August 28, 2017.

Boyertown Burial Casket Company
Name of Property

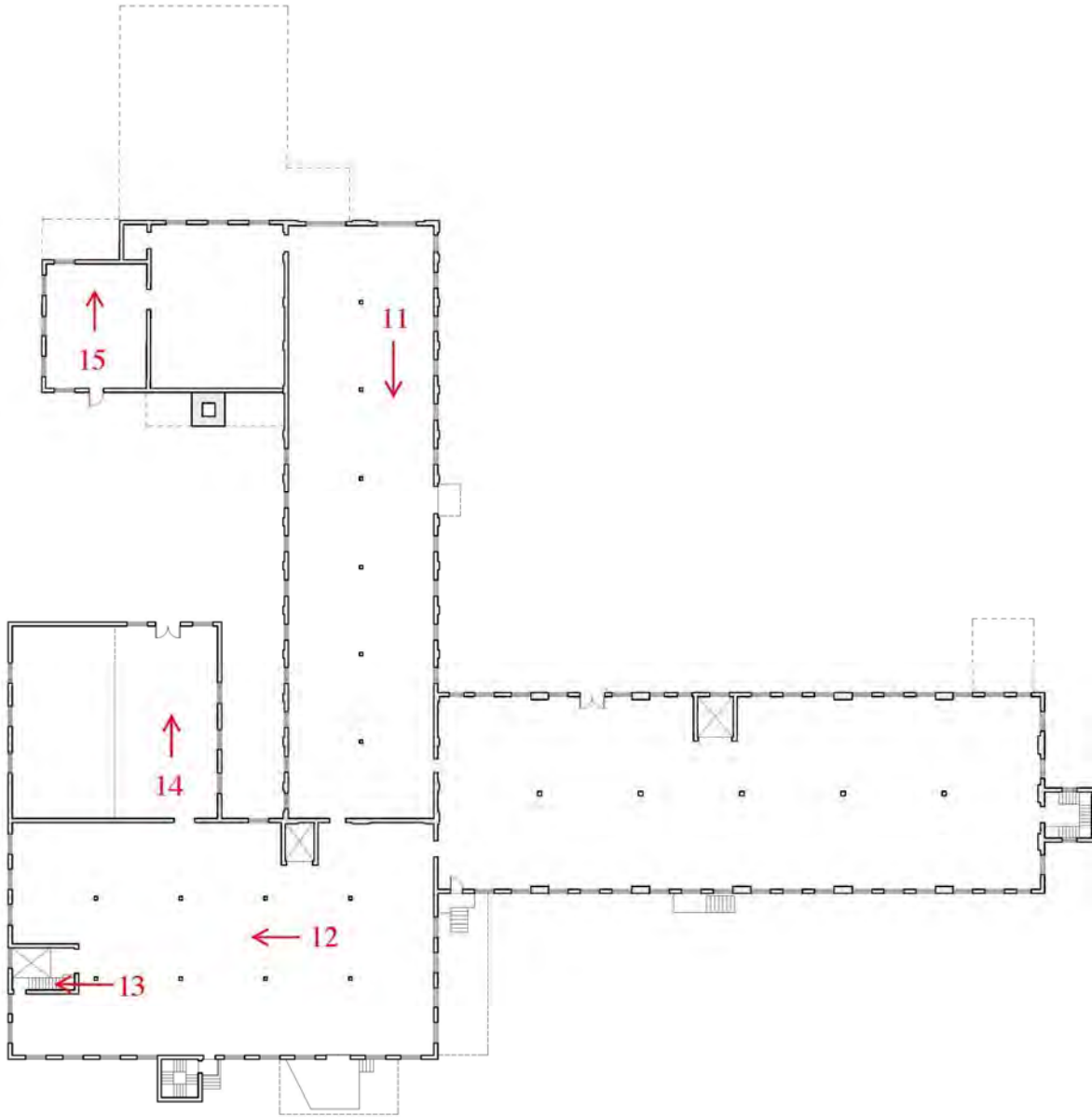
Montgomery County, PA
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Boyertown Burial Casket Company Building
329-401 W. 4th Street, East Greenville, PA
Site Plan with Photograph Key

Boyertown Burial Casket Company
Name of Property

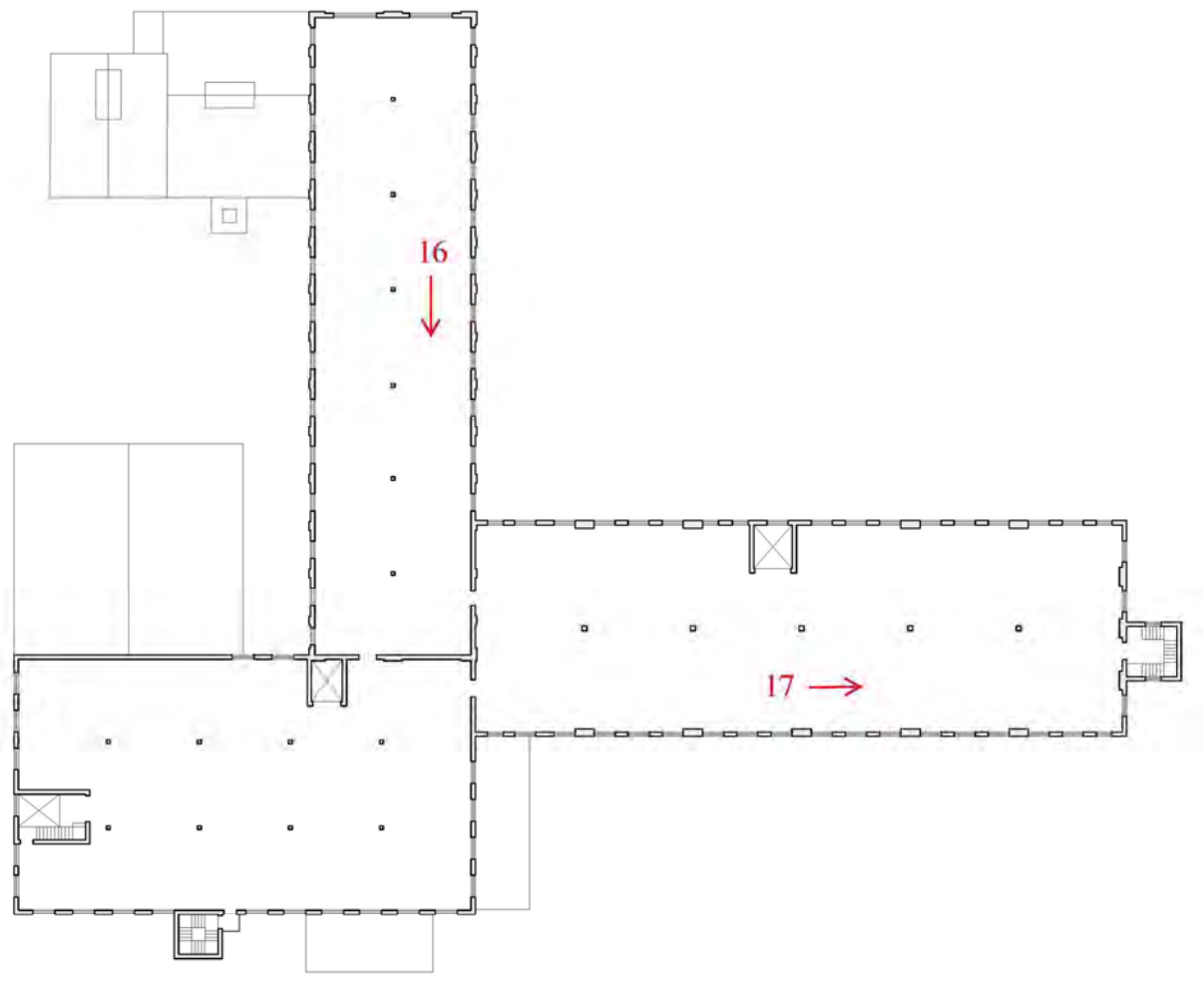
Montgomery County, PA
County and State



1st Floor Plan

Boyertown Burial Casket Company
Name of Property

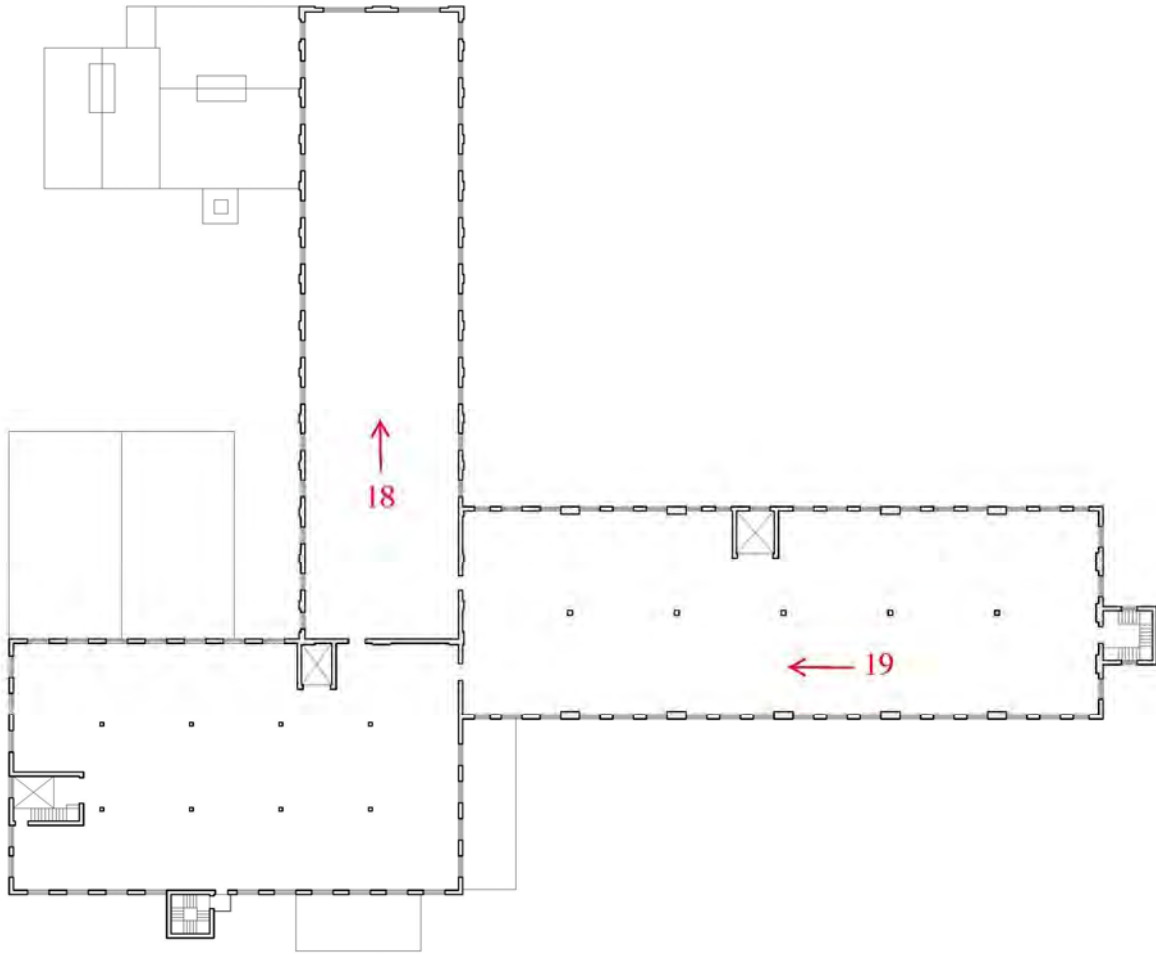
Montgomery County, PA
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2nd Floor Plan

Boyertown Burial Casket Company
Name of Property

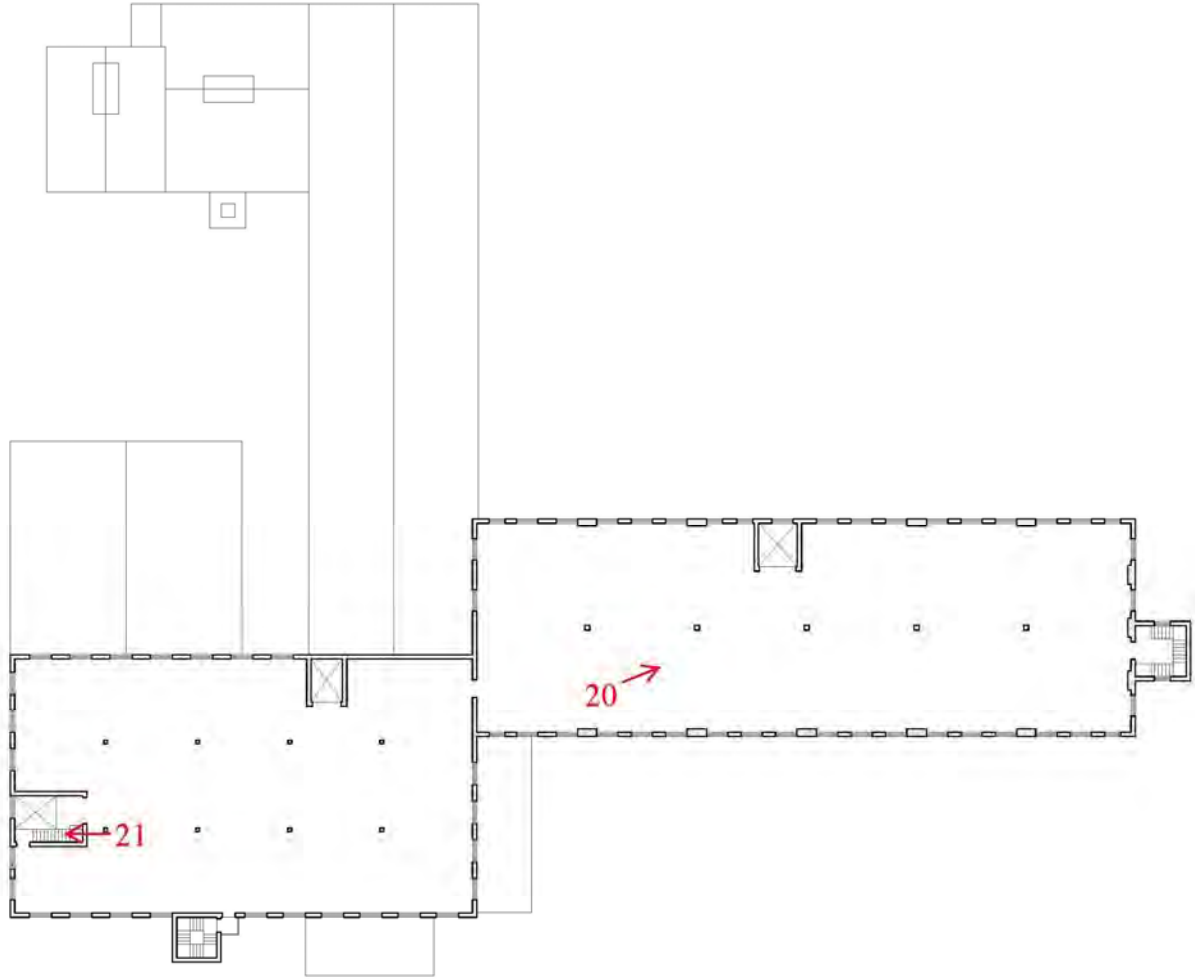
Montgomery County, PA
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3rd Floor Plan

Boyertown Burial Casket Company
Name of Property

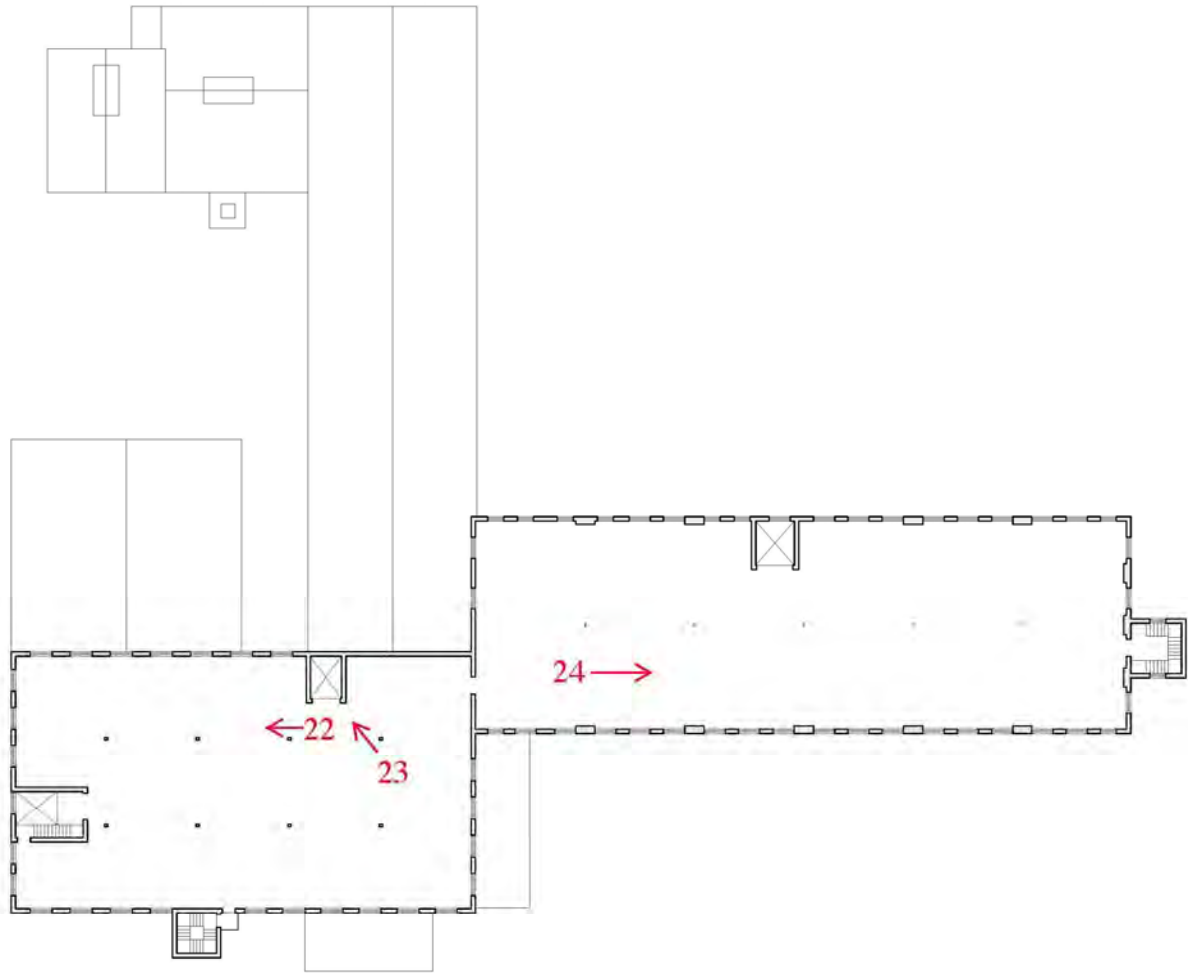
Montgomery County, PA
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4th Floor Plan

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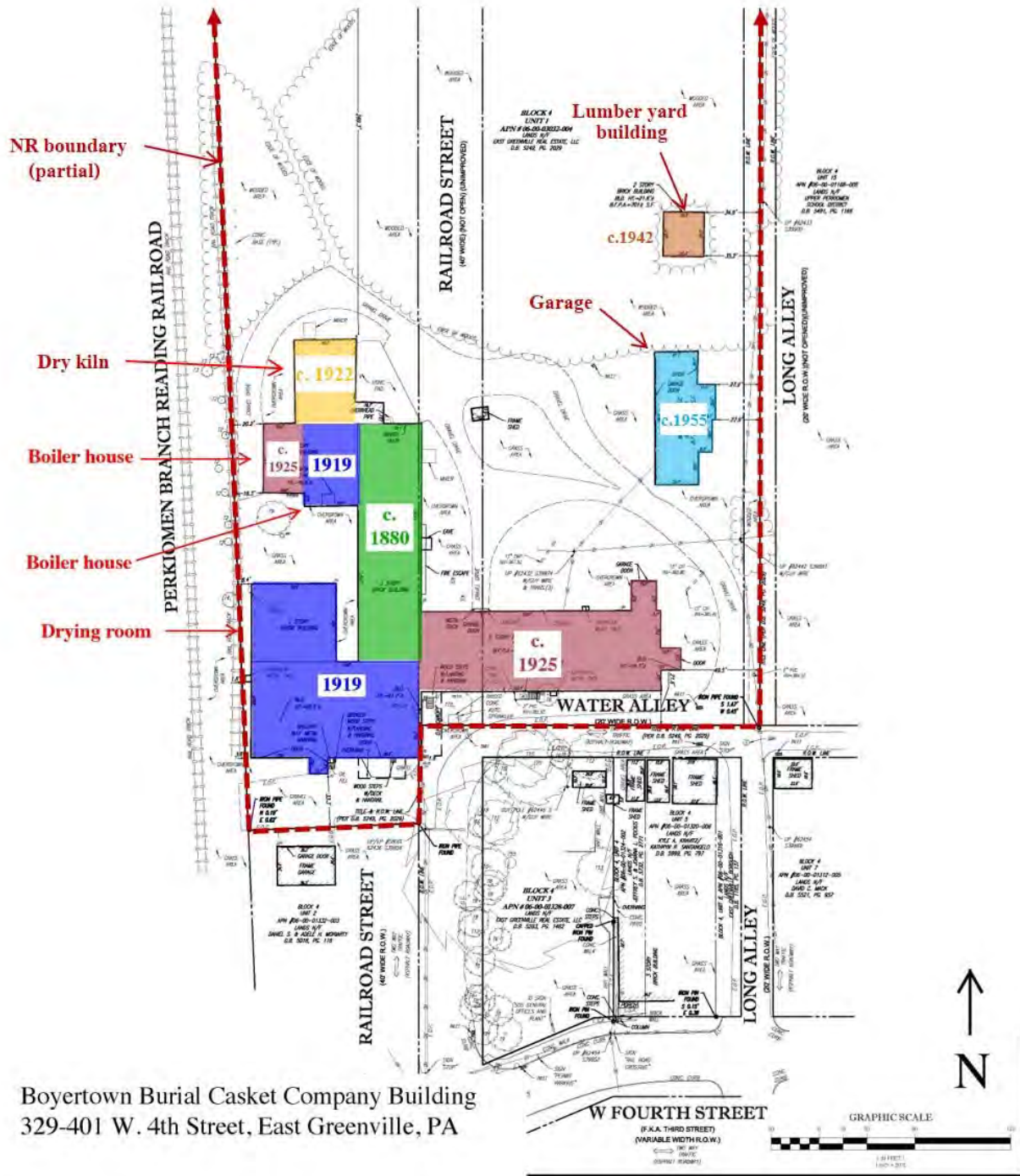


5th Floor Plan

Figure 3 – Existing Plans with Photograph Keys

Boyertown Burial Casket Company
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Boyertown Burial Casket Company Building
 329-401 W. 4th Street, East Greenville, PA

Figure 4 – Property Chronology and Site Plan

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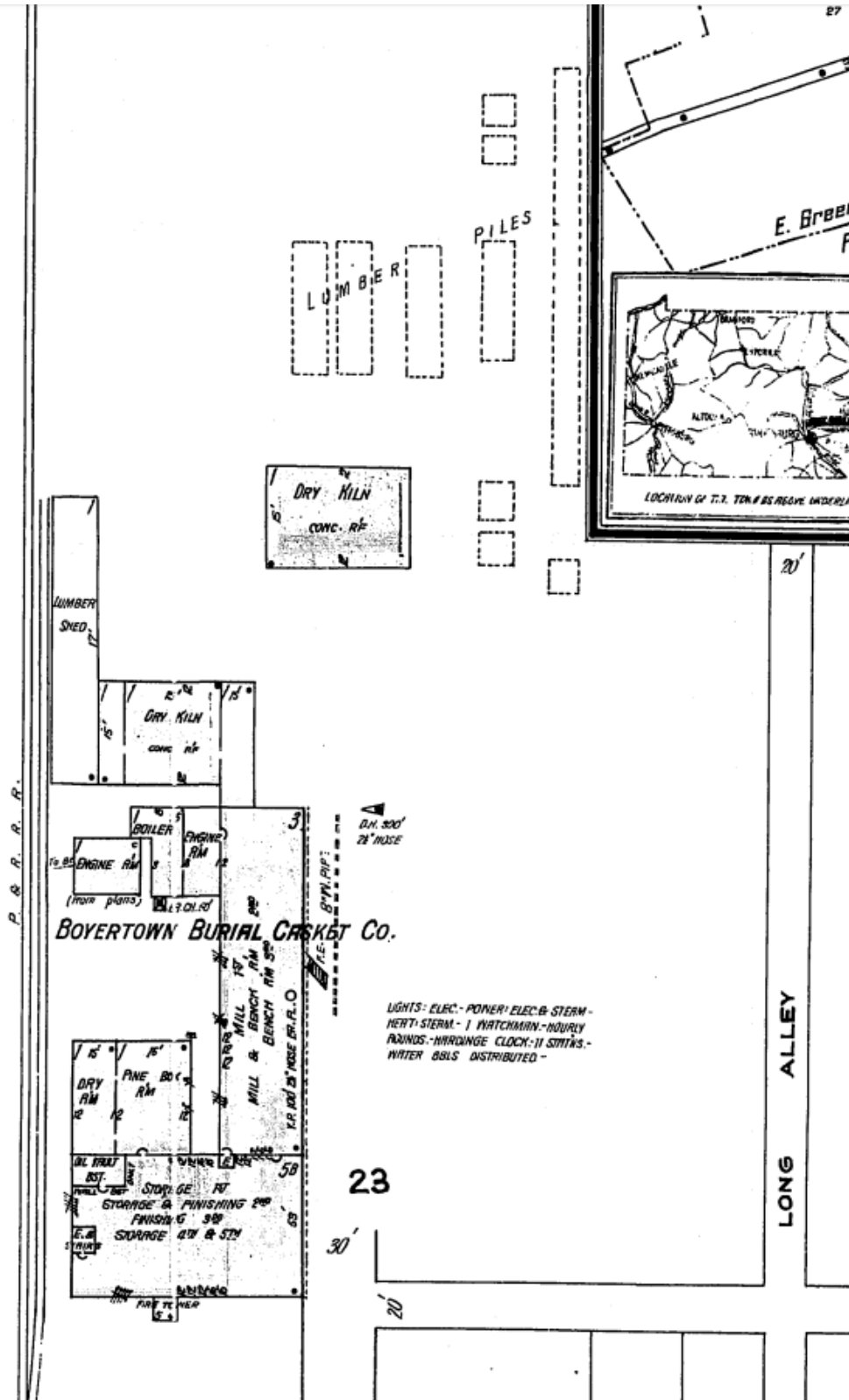


Figure 5 – Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1922.

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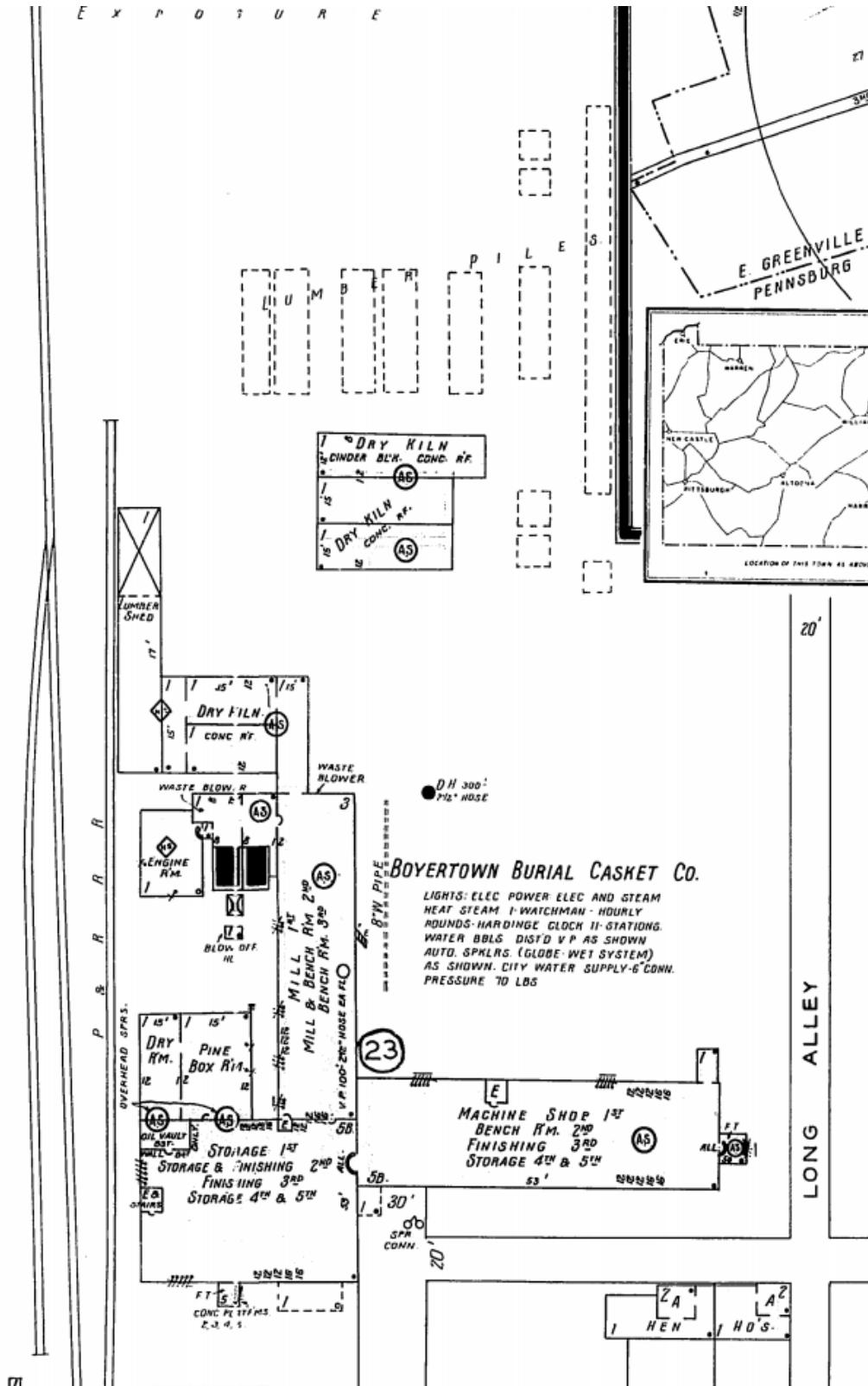


Figure 6 – Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1930.

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Figure 7 – Aerial Photograph, 1942 (w/ NR boundary). <http://www.pennpilot.psu.edu/>.
Accessed on August 14, 2017.

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Figure 8 – Aerial Photograph, 1958 (w/ NR boundary). <http://www.pennpilot.psu.edu/>.
Accessed on August 14, 2017.

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Figure 9 – Aerial Photograph, 1971 (w/ NR boundary). <http://www.pennpilot.psu.edu/>.
Accessed on August 28, 2017.

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Figure 10 – Boyertown Burial Casket Company, Boyertown, PA. Delivery truck and mechanic Eddie Bechtel, c.1940. Michelle Park, “Fomer Boyertown Burial Casket Co. to Get a State Marker.” *Reading Eagle* (25 May 2009): np.



Figure 11 – Boyertown Burial Casket Company, Boyertown, PA. Aerial image, c.1900. Michelle Park, “Fomer Boyertown Burial Casket Co. to Get a State Marker.” *Reading Eagle* (25 May 2009): np.







































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CORPORATION

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CORPORATION

Polymerland

Polymerland



















UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Boyertown Burial Casket Company

Multiple Name:

State & County: PENNSYLVANIA, Montgomery

Date Received: 11/6/2017 Date of Pending List: 12/5/2017 Date of 16th Day: 12/20/2017 Date of 45th Day: 12/21/2017 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: SG100001910

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver | <input type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG | |

Accept Return Reject 12/21/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary
Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria Accept, National Register Criterion A.

Reviewer Patrick Andrus

Patrick Andrus

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2218

Date

12/21/2017

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.



November 3, 2017

J. Paul Loether, Deputy Keeper and Chief
National Register and National Historic Landmark Program
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street NW Mail Stop 7228
Washington DC 20240

Re: NR nomination discs

Dear Mr. Loether:

The following nomination forms are 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)":

- Boyertown Burial Casket Company, Montgomery County
- Hotel Abraham Lincoln, Berks County
- Lycoming Rubber Company, Lycoming County
- Howell & Brothers Paper Hangings Manufactory, Philadelphia County
- Meyerhoff, Son and Company Building, Montgomery County

The enclosed discs contain the true and correct copies of the nominations listed above. 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