

HABS
PA
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TOWN OF BLANDBURG
Refractories Company Town
Blandburg
Cambria County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5972

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

TOWN OF BLANDBURG
Refractories Company Town

HABS No. PA-5972

Location: Cambria County, Pennsylvania

Established: 1891

Brickyard built: 1891-92, closed 1953

Company houses
built: 1895-1920s

Significance: Blandburg was formally plotted in the same year the Cambria Fire Brick Company began construction of the Blandburg brickyard. About half the town proper was company-owned housing. The brickyard was purchased by the Harbison-Walker Refractories Company in 1895 and continued to operate until the company closed it in 1953. Although the brickyard was demolished, most of the company housing remains intact under private ownership. Blandburg is particularly important in the history of refractories industry company towns because correspondence survives that documents a strike there against Harbison-Walker in 1903-04.

Project
Information:

The results of the study of refractory brickyards and towns was published in 1993: Kim E. Wallace, Brickyard Towns: A History of Refractories Industry Communities in South-Central Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: America's Industrial Heritage Project and Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service).

The contents of this publication were transmitted to the Library of Congress in report form. See additional information on the refractories industry under HABS No. PA-5973, Refractories Company Towns, Mt. Union, Huntingdon County, Pennsylvania. Research notes, field photos and copies of historic photos collected during the project were transmitted to the AIHP Collection, Special Collections, Stapleton Library, Indiana University of Pennsylvania, Indiana, PA 15705.

History

At Blandburg, site of the Harbison-Walker Refractories Company's Cambria Works, evidence survives from the town's and plant's early years to suggest the complications of creating an industrial manufacturing community. The little mountain town near the Allegheny summit was settled in the 1870s, formally plotted in 1891, and was alternately known as Figart Station for the name of its railroad station and as Blandburg after local businessman Fred Bland. It was situated in an area of small coal mines in the northeast corner of Cambria County. A seam of fire clay was discovered under the E seam coal, and in 1891 a group of investors obtained a lease on mining rights and formed the Cambria Fire Brick Company. By early 1892 their plant and kilns were completed and produced 13,000 brick each day.¹

About this same time Harbison and Walker Refractories of Pittsburgh was looking for ways to expand production and supplement its clay supplies. In 1884 the company had purchased the Woodland Fire Brick plant in Clearfield County, and in 1893 purchased mining rights on fourteen acres near Blandburg. The next year negotiations were completed to transfer Cambria Fire Brick stock and the firebrick works to Harbison and Walker for \$80,000.²

During the months after the sale company officers in Pittsburgh wrote the Blandburg superintendent advising him on how to deal with local business people and with the company's own employees, guiding him through the integration of the newly acquired "Cambria [County] Works" with the larger company, and introducing him to its more modern organizational practices. They inquired when brick with the Harbison and Walker brand would be available and forwarded orders for him to fill from iron and glass manufacturers in New England, mid-Atlantic and midwestern states and even for customers in Cuba and China. He was admonished to adhere to more strict company record-keeping methods--to file monthly reports and divide costs of labor, time, and materials between appropriate accounts. He was sent specifications on plant improvements and maintenance--the Blandburg office was papered, a new floor and additional windows were installed in the

¹"Fred Bland" in Biographical and Portrait Cyclopedia of Cambria County (Philadelphia: Union Publishing Company, 1896), 264-65. "Names on Bi-Centennial Quilt and Brief History of Blandburg," (Reade Township Volunteer Fire Company Ladies Auxiliary, 1976). James E. MacCloskey, Jr., History of Harbison-Walker Refractories Company: From Star to Vega and Beyond (Pittsburgh, 1952), 36-37.

²MacCloskey, 36-37.

main plant building, and the overall layout of storage sheds and railroad sidings was rearranged for greater efficiency.³

The surviving correspondence from the Pittsburgh office to the Blandburg superintendent is one-sided and spotty, but is most complete for the years just after the acquisition of the Cambria works until about 1904. These early letters are especially valuable for the view they provide of a strike by brickyard workers against Harbison-Walker Refractories. The correspondence gives an account of the strike that is, of course, company-biased, and for that reason also provides fascinating insights into the mindset and strategizing of the company leadership.⁴ Reports in the Johntown Tribune allow just a glimpse at how the strike appeared to local residents and participants.

In 1899 a letter from the Harbison-Walker assistant treasurer notified each works of the company policy towards employee unionization. There had been some undisclosed problems at the Cambria works and the instigators "made some threat of sending a committee over to the other works to stir up trouble." Managers were to be on the watch for these men and to identify them by name so that they could be discharged from the company's employ and from company property.⁵ In 1902 Harbison-Walker general manager Otto M. Reif responded to the Blandburg superintendent J. A. Boyd's report about impending unionization efforts. He firmly instructed Boyd to "make it known that we will never recognize any union and that any men joining such an organization are liable to discharge at once."⁶ In 1903 there was more "trouble." This time it escalated into a strike described in the trade journal Clay Record as "one of the most bitterly contested in the history of labor disputes in Western Pennsylvania."⁷

On May 9, 1903, the National Association of Brick, Tile, and Terra Cotta Workmen of the American Federation of Labor declared a strike against Harbison-Walker Refractories. According to Clay Record their only demand was the reinstatement of twenty-five men

³H-W to John E. Evans, correspondence, May-December 1894.

⁴For example, for almost three weeks after the strike was officially declared, the word "strike" does not appear in the letters. Company officers preferred to use "shutdown," a word that implied that the company chose to close a plant perhaps as a way of preempting a strike.

⁵H. W. Croft to Cambria, Dec. 19, 1899.

⁶O. M. Reif to J. A. Boyd, Sept. 18, 1902.

⁷"New Move Made By the Harbison-Walker Refractories Co. to Operate Their Plants," Clay Record 23 (August 29, 1903), 21.

whom the company reportedly fired not because of their union membership but because they tried "to induce others to join" the union.⁸ At Blandburg organizing attempts appear to have started among the company coal miners. On March 11, 1903, Superintendent Boyd was instructed to inquire quietly among local independent coal mine operators for estimates to supply the works. A suggestion that the company could shut down its mines to demonstrate its independence was deemed a good strategy to deter a strike by coal miners as well as "help us considerably with clay miners."⁹

On April 1, however, the Pittsburgh office responded to a notice that the Blandburg clay miners had requested a wage increase. Boyd was to schedule a meeting and advised not "to mention anything about a Union. If the men come to meet us and say that they represent a Union, it will be a good opportunity for us to tell them that we cannot recognize them as such."¹⁰ Three weeks later Reif asked Boyd to rush the construction of a fence around the works and "to write me a letter daily, keeping me fully posted on everything that occurs at your Works while this trouble lasts. We must all co-operate and try to block any move they make."¹¹

Reif believed that he sensed "a weakness on the men's part" and hoped that they were "not yet ready to go out." He instructed Boyd to stand firm on company policy and "keep discharging all men who become prominent in this union." Miners who had been fired and were still living in company houses were to be sent eviction notices.¹² There is some hint that the strike and threatened evictions exposed some illegal or at least damaging aspects of Harbison-Walker's housing policies; in September a company lawyer sent Boyd copies of the company's revised tenement house leases with a terse note to "destroy all the old ones you have in your possession for they are dangerous."¹³ He was to

⁸Ibid. "Brick Makers On Strike," Johnstown Tribune (May 9, 1903). "Brick Plants Are Tied Up," Johnstown Tribune (May 11, 1903).

⁹H. W. Croft to H. B. Errett, cc. J. A. Boyd, March 2, 1903. O. M. Reif to J. A. Boyd, March 11, 1903, March 12, 1903.

¹⁰H. W. Croft to J. A. Boyd, April 1, 1903.

¹¹O. M. Reif to J. A. Boyd, April 22, 1903.

¹²O. M. Reif to J. A. Boyd, April 22, 1903.

¹³J. E. MacCloskey to J. A. Boyd, September 30, 1903.

take pains to be accommodating to the replacement workers--immigrants recruited for the company by an agent in New York City.

We might be compelled to send in more men to you right along and we must take care of them when they come. The proper way to do this is to have the beds set up in the house and enough to eat on the day that they arrive. This is one of the most important things about keeping the foreign laborers.¹⁴

By May 15 the Blandburg brickyard was closed and workers were throwing rocks at the company watchmen. Harbison-Walker general manager H. W. Croft counseled Boyd to be "extremely careful" and avoid "any outbreaks of temper . . . as it will certainly do us a lot of harm. If you treat this tin-can procession just as lightly as possible and jolly them a little, it will do a great deal more good than anything you can do." Croft believed the "shut-down" would continue two or three more weeks, but wrote that he wouldn't be concerned even if it lasted longer. "If there is any Works that deserves a good loaf, this is it."¹⁵ Blandburg was judged to be the most intransigent of all the Harbison-Walker plants. "Do you feel any disposition on the part of any of your men to want to go to work again?" Croft asked on May 19. "I expect your Works to be the last one to start up, as it has always been such a hot bed for strikers."¹⁶

Croft wrote to Boyd again the next week predicting that he would

have trouble all summer at your Works from the nature of the people in Blandburg. Next to your own Works I think Retort and Philipsburg are about the worst, particularly Retort, as they have pretty much the same kind of element you have.

Boyd was kept posted on the situation at other plants--that there was a small contingent of men still working at the Widemire, Clearfield, and Woodland works; that a union meeting at Hayes Station drew only ten members; that organizing efforts at Johnstown and Mt. Union had been abandoned as futile. As a preliminary to starting up the Blandburg works, Croft suggested that Boyd quietly go about encouraging his men to reconsider their actions. "I would begin doing as much missionary work among your men as possible and have your foremen and clerks talk

¹⁴O. M. Reif to J. A. Boyd, April 22, 1903.

¹⁵H. W. Croft to J. A. Boyd, May 15, 1903.

¹⁶H. W. Croft to J. A. Boyd, May 19, 1903.

in this way. Also talk to any of the merchants and people in town who seem to have influence." At the same time he was cautioned to avoid personally alienating his neighbors:

do nothing to make the strikers or the people dislike you personally as this will have a great deal to do with the Company's success, and of course, has everything to do with whatever pleasure you get out of living in Blandburg. There is no reason why any of the inhabitants should have any feeling against you, as it is the Company that is doing all of this, and I shall so try to impress the men in talking to you when at Blandburg.¹⁷

The company sent official letters of appreciation to employees who remained faithful, and sought the arrest and prosecution of those who could be identified as somehow breaking the law.¹⁸ In Clinton and Clearfield counties the company undermined workers' confidence in their union leaders by organizing trips to Pittsburgh and Mt. Union where they could see plants that were still operating contrary to union claims of a company-wide shut-down. Croft wrote to Boyd May 29 describing the apparent success of this measure and suggested the time might be right to try it at Blandburg by selecting a delegation of "union men whom you are satisfied will report as things actually are." He almost bragged about the calculation behind the move; "this might have been done sometime ago but there was no use until the thing was about ripe."¹⁹

There was an equal note of self-satisfaction in Croft's intimation of the intended demoralizing effect of brazenly transporting immigrant replacements past the strikers. Even though "they are certainly holding out and seem very determined," he wrote, "our shipping in three or four car-loads of foreigners and having special engine to run them right through and push them into our yard has had a very good effect all along the line."²⁰ According to the Johnstown Tribune, however, this strategy sometimes backfired. In July, sixty-eight men deserted the works when they learned they had been employed as strike breakers. In one version of this event, the men became suspicious when they

¹⁷H. W. Croft to J. A. Boyd, May 21, 1903.

¹⁸H. W. Croft to Boyd, Davis, Errett, and M'Quillen, May 16, 1903. President and General Manager to Dear Sir, n. d. H. W. Croft to J. A. Boyd, May 29, 1903, June 3, 1903. J. E. MacCloskey to J. A. Boyd, November 6, 1903.

¹⁹H. W. Croft to J. A. Boyd, May 29, 1903.

²⁰H. W. Croft to J. A. Boyd, June 11, 1903.

were confined within the barricaded works and delegated one of the group to escape after dark to question the local citizens.

In another version, some women who lived in a house next to the works were threatened by a company engineer when they told the new men why they were recruited.²¹

Solidarity--between immigrants and natives, strikers and other area residents, brick workers' and other unions--was an important factor during the strike and was alternately challenged and defended. The brick workers' union called for a general boycott of Harbison-Walker products and claimed to have the support of railroaders who refused to move 500 cars loaded with Harbison-Walker bricks and of the United Mine Workers and other branches of the Federation of Labor which pledged not to work anywhere Harbison-Walker bricks would be used.²² In May 1903, a striker from the company's local clay mine wrote a letter to the editor in response to the reports portraying the strikers as "criminals, plotting death and destruction." On the contrary, he wrote, the strikers' "reputation and character will not suffer in comparison with the individuals who misrepresented them." It was these "amateur detectives and ambitious sub-officials" who circulated reports that the strikers were "cutthroats and rioters" and who envisioned themselves as the dime novel hero "who, single-handed and alone, beats off the 'horde' of infuriated strikers and wins fame and a superintendency, as well as an increase in salary."

The writer glossed over any divisions between strikers and local residents, emphasizing instead that the strikers were themselves local residents and that they were being slanderously accused by "those who are practically strangers in our little community." He also suggested that these outsiders were responsible for the antagonism between immigrants and residents:

Ignorant foreigners have been led to believe that lifelong residents and taxpayers are seeking to do them bodily harm, and as a consequence they appear on our highways armed and equipped in true brigand style, displaying knives and pistols, to the admiration of the Small Boy and fear of the peaceful denizens of Dean Township.

Two months after this letter was published, the Tribune described a violent confrontation between the Blandburg strikers and Slavic

²¹"Still Trying To Break It," Johnstown Tribune (July 1, 1903). "Every Man Marched Out," Johnstown Tribune (July 3, 1903).

²²"Every Man Marched Out," Johnstown Tribune (July 3, 1903).

immigrants hired to replace them. The strikers stationed a group of boys at the works entrance to taunt the "foreigners" into threatening them. Several people were injured and a nearby house was damaged in the ensuing "riot." The company guards, purportedly hired to protect the works and the immigrants, were drawn into the fight. One was arrested for beating the foreigners trying to get them back into the brickyard. Any potential alliance between townspeople, strikers, and sympathetic replacement workers had disintegrated.²³

Immigrants, primarily from Eastern Europe, were sent to the plants to supplement the workforce throughout the year, even before the strike. In September 1903, an agent in New York wrote to Boyd to arrange for someone to meet the "fifteen Hungarians and Poles for the coal and clay mines" he was putting on a train to Bellwood.²⁴ The superintendent at Farrandville in Clinton County wrote Boyd complaining about having to train new crews:

We are having our trouble here just now. Forty-six men arrived this morning. They are laborers whom we secured from agents in New York and shipped here ourselves. They are worse than sheep and a tough set at that.²⁵

Superintendent Boyd was reminded at several points to reserve vacant company houses for new arrivals. In November O. M. Reif sent a representative to contact employment agents in New York and Philadelphia, specifically requesting that priority be given to finding families with at least two boys willing to go to work as "offbearers."²⁶ Boys aged thirteen to fifteen would need their parents' permission. Boyd inquired whether it would be legal for them to work rather than go to school. Reif replied that the district "Factory inspector" had assured him that "it is alright if they can read and write in their own language and if they attended the schools in their own Country, so I guess we cannot get into trouble of this kind."²⁷ Agents were informed that

the smallest boys can make 75 [cents] per day and so on up, according to their strength, to \$1.20 per day. They can easily do their days' work in about 7 hours and always get a

²³"Strikers Not Lawbreakers," Johnstown Tribune (May 22, 1903). "Another Harbison-Walker Riot," Johnstown Tribune (July 29, 1903).

²⁴C. J. Henderson to J. A. Boyd, September 6, 1903.

²⁵Davis to J. A. Boyd, March 20, 1903.

²⁶O. M. Reif to Nin McQuillen, R. P. M. Davis, J. A. Boyd, November 3, 1903.

²⁷O. M. Reif to J. A. Boyd, November 10, 1903.

chance to work extra if they wish, whereby they can increase their earnings. We will agree to give the head of the family work providing he is a willing worker and does his work satisfactorily. A man can make from \$1.45, for labor work, to \$2.15 per day for the better class of work, according to his ability.

We will agree to pay back the fares of the family when the boys have worked for the Company for three full pays, or 1-1 1/2 months.²⁸

Although Reif hoped to find fifty boys for the Cambria works, he told Boyd there was

no danger of you getting a rush of these families as our reports from the East are very discouraging on these lines. Boys of this age [are] not coming to this Country and their parents when they come at all come without them. However, if we get one a week for all our Works, it will help us some.²⁹

The Pennsylvania Industrial Directory for 1919 listed the number of "men under sixteen" reported at each plant. Two-thirds of the plants in twelve Pennsylvania counties show no under-age employees. Among the remainder it is unusual for the number to exceed four or five. The Osceola Silica and Fire Brick Company and the Bickford Fire Brick Company in Clearfield County were exceptions, reporting forty-five and thirty under-sixteen employees, respectively.³⁰

Despite all the company strategizing and recruitment, in August 1903 the strike was still on and the plants were producing at only 60 percent capacity. The industry journal, Clay Record, reported that the company was resorting to the courts to obtain injunctions against strikers at each plant. The first was granted by Judge O'Connor in Cambria County "against sixty persons, twelve of whom were women." Two hundred new men were working at the Blandburg brickyard, and the company testified that because of "the interference of the strikers" it was "forced

²⁸O. M. Reif to C. J. Henderson, cc. Nin McQuillen, J. A. Boyd, and R. P. M. Davis, November 3, 1903.

²⁹O. M. Reif to J. A. Boyd, November 10, 1903.

³⁰Pennsylvania Industrial Directories. Perhaps these two companies were more honest in reporting the number of young employees.

for their protection to keep them quartered in buildings erected on the property."³¹

Company officers conferred with their lawyers attempting to preserve the injunction as long as possible. They were apprehensive that the judge would rescind the injunction "for political effect" before the November election.³² Although the Blandburg operations continued to be plagued by strikers, Boyd was advised that since there was "no violence or gatherings as formly [sic], no action should be taken . . . this seems to be the proper thing to do in view of the coming election and the situation in this county."³³ Minor confrontations continued through September and October. Boyd reported to Pittsburgh that his immigrants were being harassed,³⁴ and Pittsburgh warned him to arrange to escort some men coming from the Retort works to repair kilns at Blandburg.

We do not want the strikers to get a hold of them again and scare them away. The men who went up formerly were met by strikers and now it is impossible for me to get any of their friends to go to your Works as they are afraid of being killed.³⁵

A few days before the election the company sent Boyd several reinforcements for his guard contingent. They were led by Capt. Thomas E. Clark who was highly recommended as a veteran of strikes "during the Molly McGuire days" in eastern Pennsylvania's anthracite coal region.³⁶ Things remained quiet through the election, but Boyd nevertheless requested that the Harbison-Walker legal department apply to the governor for commissions for Clark and his men as state-sanctioned Coal and Iron Police. His request received immediate approval because it was thought wise to keep round-the-clock guards "for sometime to come, in order to keep confidence among the foreigners." The commissions would put the guards "in a much better position to protect our men when off our own property" and if "they get into any trouble, a commission

³¹"New Move Made By the Harbison-Walker Refractories Co. to Operate Their Plants," Clay Record 23 (August 29, 1903), 21.

³²O. M. Reif to J. A. Boyd, October 23, 1903.

³³Roberts Murphy to J. A. Boyd, October 2, 1903. H. W. Croft to J. A. Boyd, October 3, 1903. H. W. Croft to Roberts Murphy, October 5, 1903.

³⁴S. C. Walker to J. A. Boyd, October 22, 1903. O. M. Reif to J. A. Boyd, October 23, 1903.

³⁵O. M. Reif to J. A. Boyd, September 16, 1903.

³⁶O. M. Reif to J. A. Boyd, November 4, 1903 and November 5, 1903.

from the Governor of the State certainly ought to be of some protection to them."³⁷

The company's ability to keep its works in production, import and house workers, and secure the backing of the state eventually defeated the strikers at each plant. In October 1904, eighteen months after the strike was declared, 5,000 members of the Brick, Tile, and Terra Cotta Workers Union were still officially on strike. The union was contributing \$1,000 every week to commissaries in cities in Kentucky, southern Ohio, and western Pennsylvania to help member families weather the strike. The union president acknowledged that they had little chance of success:

While during the last few years the employer was hunting men to work for him and was willing to pay him a fair compensation for his labor, we find that today hundreds of our members are idle and can not get work under any condition. We also find that many employers have taken advantage of the stagnation in our industry to reduce wages and insist on longer hours, not because the price of material has dropped, but, as one employer expressed himself to me, because there were idle men who were willing to work for almost anything.³⁸

In February 1904, the Tribune reported that the strike at Blandburg seemed to have died out. The works was shut down, according to the company, because of a lull in demand and many of the workers had moved away to find other jobs.³⁹

Ironically inserted among the company dispatches during the strike is a routine memo asking each works to forward a list of its "English speaking employees to whom we can send the Ladies Home Journal and Youths Companion."⁴⁰ This mundane example of company paternalism continuing as usual is suggestive of the degree of intransigence in management's conception of the worker-company relationship. On the one hand employees were just another works expense--housing and recruitment were factored into accounting categories just like plant repairs and new machinery. On the other hand, they were expected to behave as aspiring

³⁷S. C. Walker to J. A. Boyd, November 7, 1903. J. E. MacCloskey to J. A. Boyd, November 7, 1903.

³⁸"Brick and Tile Workers Strike a Failure," Clay Record 25 (October 15, 1904), 34. "Brick, Tile, and Terra Cotta Workers Prepare for Trouble," Clay Record 25 (September 15, 1904), 25.

³⁹"Strike Has Died Out," [Johnstown] The Daily Tribune (February 18, 1904).

⁴⁰Hamilton Stewart to all works, October 27, 1903.

members of the middle class--cultivated, rational individuals with respect for property.

In 1916 Harbison-Walker took its efforts to achieve these contradictory ends to a new level. Perhaps motivated by lasting effects of the strike or by the number of immigrant residents who needed to be "Americanized," it built a substantial and thoroughly equipped community building in Blandburg and hired a director from New York City to organize activities. According to company publicity, superintendent Boyd turned the first shovel in ground-breaking ceremonies and "Harbison and Walker Refractories Company employees, cadets and citizens" participated by digging out the basement and foundation footers. A contractor from Clearfield built the \$17,000, two-story, buff-brick building.⁴¹

Sgt. Charles E. Graffius, the company's "Secretary and Physical Director of Welfare Work" at Blandburg, had high credentials, including four years of military service in Alaska and the Philipinnes "as a government school teacher and missionary" and ten years experience in "Y.M.C.A. Welfare work" in several cities. A report filed after he was in residence for three months listed his accomplishments and provides a summary of his responsibilities. He oversaw the preparation of the "Welfare Grove" playground equipped with "swings, see-saws, merry-go-rounds, volley ball courts, quoits and other amusements." He organized 672 people "on 63 teams of volley ball, base ball, quoits, rifle teams, Cadets and Boys' Brigade, Camp Fire Girls, aquatic and first aid teams." In general he "visited the homes and worked early and late to entertain and find amusement for all the people of Blandburg."⁴²

Graffius also had a hand in attempts to improve the "sanitary conditions" of Blandburg yards and gardens. The company built fifty-two houses after it came to Blandburg, and the expansion apparently progressed without careful attention to order and appearance. During 1914 and 1915, the company held contests for the best vegetable and flower gardens and supervised an overall clean-up recorded in "before and after" photographs in a company publication.⁴³ In the early 1920s, the company sponsored another improvement project, remodeling a number of its houses. Carpenters built partitions in second-floor bedrooms to provide

⁴¹"The Harbison-Walker Refractories Company Works Blandburg, Penna.," booklet, 1916.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

more privacy, excavated basements and used the new space to install furnaces, showers, and toilets.⁴⁴

The 1920s were Blandburg's peak years. The brickyard employed 213 in 1925. There was an estimated population of 1,000.⁴⁵ In the privately owned section of town east of Bland Avenue there were three hotels, four churches--Catholic, Lutheran, Brethren, and Methodist--and a number of general and specialty stores. A fire company was organized with company assistance and the company-supported baseball team, the Blandburg Cubs, continued with enthusiastic community interest through the 1950s.⁴⁶

One resident gave some hint that Bland Avenue was something of a cultural and class dividing line in the town and that the Upper and Yellow Rows of company housing were a "rougher" and riskier area for outsiders to frequent. Yet more people professed no memories of tension between private and company-owned residential areas or between "immigrants" and "natives." Considering the longevity and intensity of the 1903 strike there must have been lingering resentment between strike supporters and strike "breakers," a division that seems to have fallen along a native-immigrant line, but the strike has all but faded from local oral history.⁴⁷

By 1931 the brickyard roster fell from its 1920s high of over 200 to 137, and in 1947 to 103. A union was finally organized and recognized just after World War II, but it was to be a short-lived victory. In 1949 Harbison-Walker began selling company houses to its tenants. Some Blandburg residents interpreted the action as a sign that the company was planning to abandon the community, and in fact, the plant was closed in 1953. A number of men moved with their families to a Harbison-Walker plant in Ohio to work until their retirement, then returned to Blandburg. A few were hired at brickyards in Altoona and Clearfield County. Others found work in "the strippings," the strip mine operations around the area. The kilns and plant buildings were all demolished in the 1950s, with the exception of the office which

⁴⁴Laudelle Beers, interview by author, July 9, 1991.

⁴⁵Pennsylvania Industrial Directory (1925). Blandburg (Sanborn Map Company, 1929).

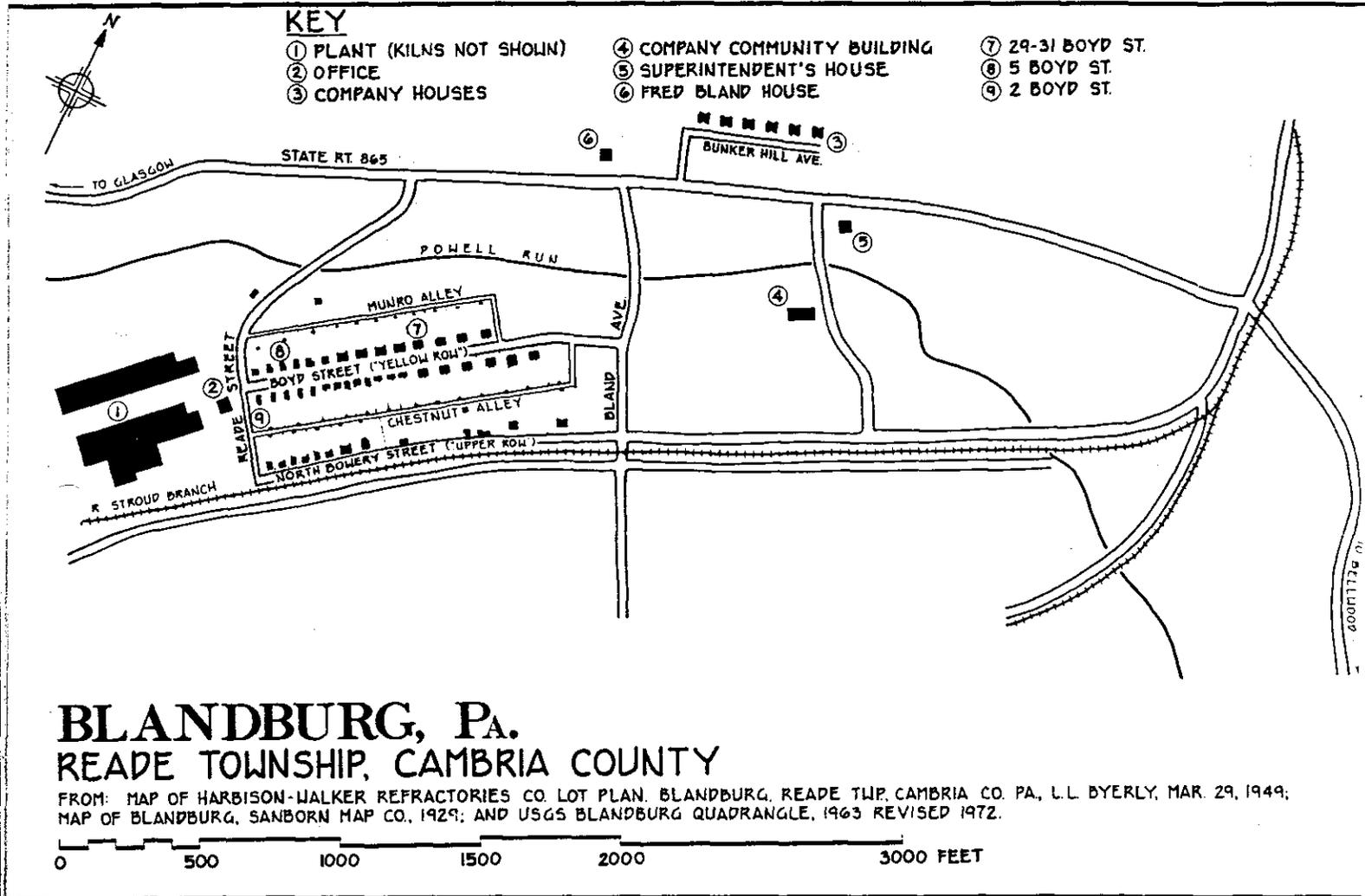
⁴⁶Pennsylvania Industrial Directories. Laudelle Beers, interview by author, July 9, 1991. Thomas McGowan, interview by author, April 27, 1991.

⁴⁷Thomas McGowan, interview by author, April 27, 1991. McGowan, a local historian, remembered being told by an old brickyard employee that there was once a strike at the plant, that a fence was built around it, and that one person was killed. The H-W correspondence includes a few letters from the time of the strike that refer to "the woman shot by the man in her house." Perhaps this is the death the brickyarder remembered, but the letters don't contain enough evidence to explain how or if the incident was connected to the strike.

was converted into a residence. Forty years later Blandburg's identity as a brickyard town is still very strong even for residents born after the plant closed. Even though the kilns and the plant--the structures outsiders might consider the most obvious physical remnants of the brickyard--are gone, family and community memories and the distinct, U-shaped neighborhood of former company houses provide living, day-to-day reminders.⁴⁸

⁴⁸Interviews by author, Blandburg, Pa.: Thomas McGowan, April 27, 1991; Steve Andrews, June 13, 1991; Geraldine Sible, June 13, 1991; Lonnie Wilson, June 13, 1991.

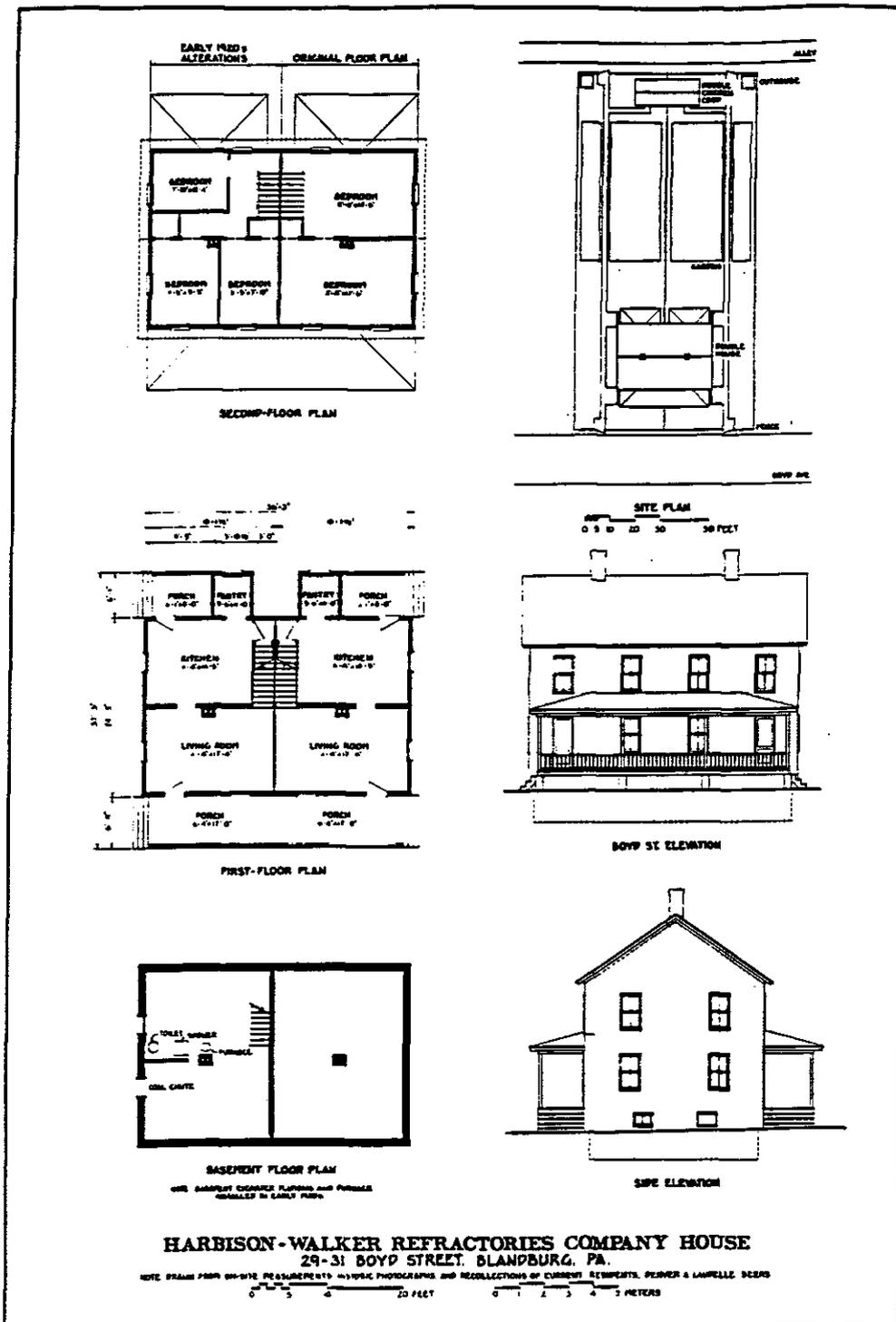
APPENDIX I



Map of Blandburg showing location of plant and company houses. Drawn by Isabel Yang.

Reproduced from Wallace, Kim E., Brickyard Towns: A History of Refractories Industry Communities in South-Central Pennsylvania 1993 (Washington, D.C.: America's Industrial Heritage Project and Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service).

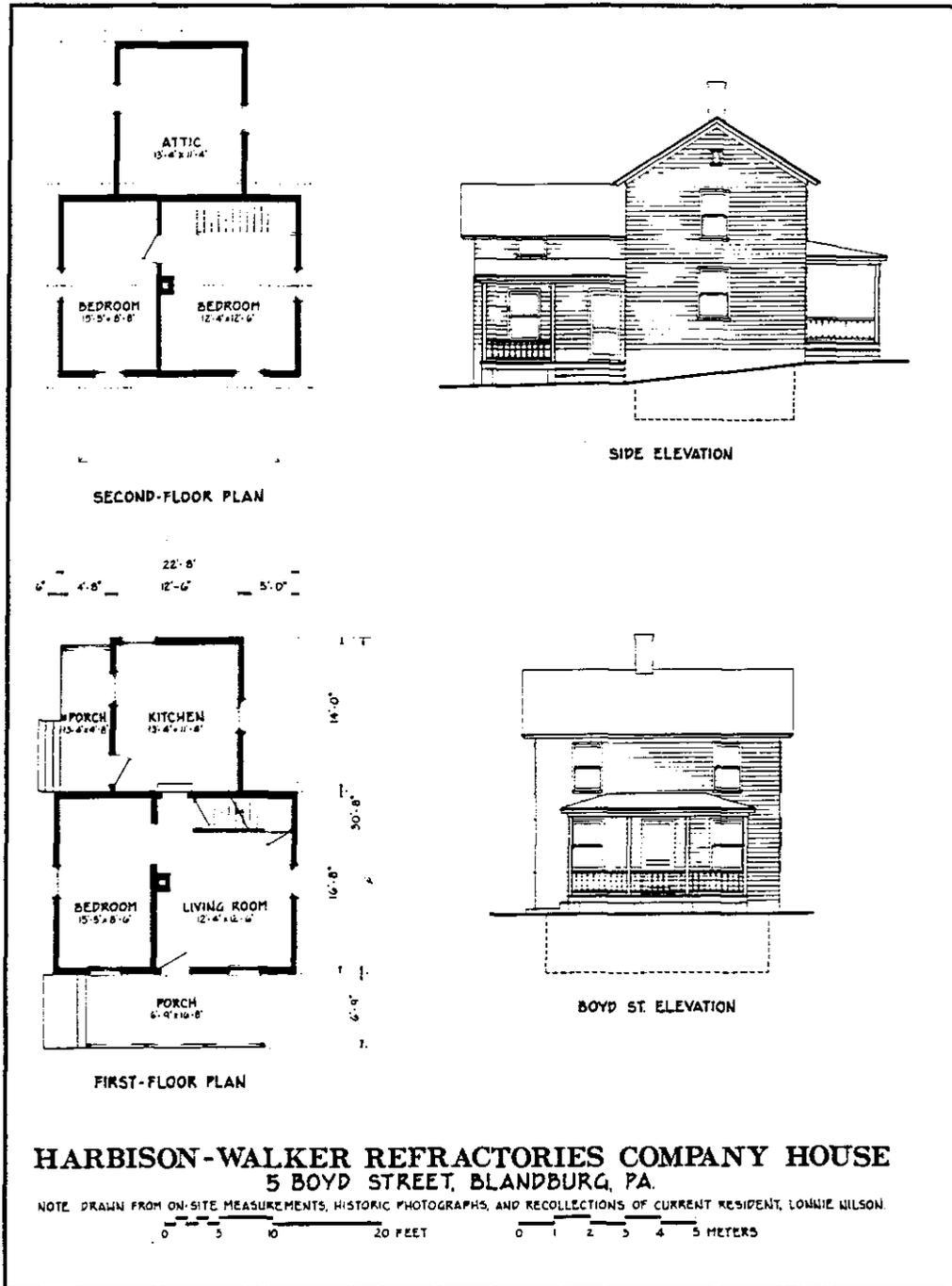
APPENDIX II



Basement and second-floor plans show 1920s improvements to this double house on "Yellow Row," Blandburg. Drawn by Isabel Yang.

Reproduced from Wallace, Kim E., Brickyard Towns: A History of Refractories Industry Communities in South-Central Pennsylvania 1993 (Washington, D.C.: America's Industrial Heritage Project and Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service).

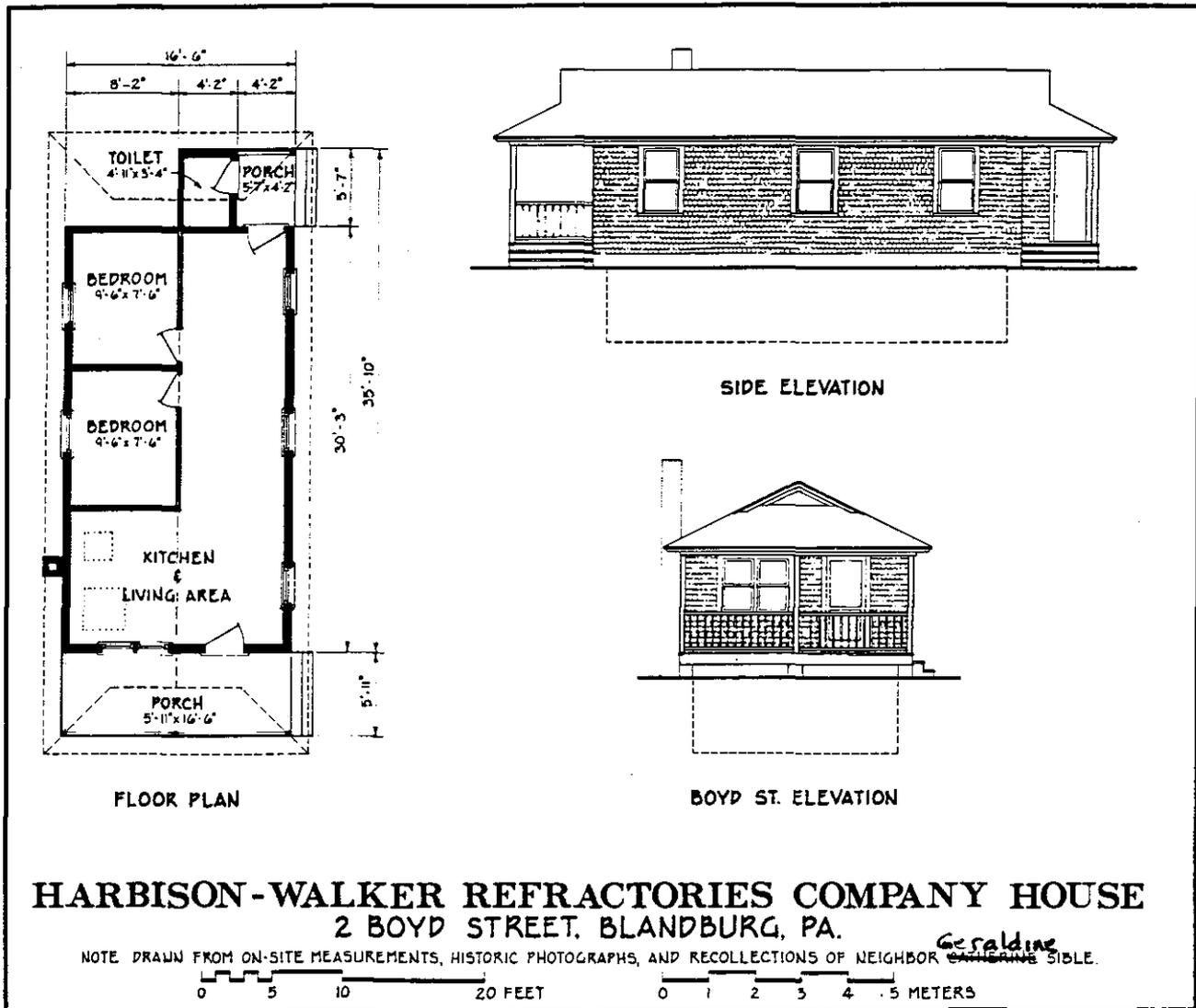
APPENDIX III



Floor plans and elevations, Harbison-Walker Company house, 5 Boyd Street, Blandburg. Drawn by Isabel Yang.

Reproduced from Wallace, Kim E., Brickyard Towns: A History of Refractories Industry Communities in South-Central Pennsylvania 1993 (Washington, D.C.: America's Industrial Heritage Project and Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service).

APPENDIX IV



Floor plans and elevations, Harbison-Walker Company house, 2 Boyd Street, Blandburg. Drawn by Isabel Yang.

Reproduced from Wallace, Kim E., Brickyard Towns: A History of Refractories Industry Communities in South-Central Pennsylvania 1993 (Washington, D.C.: America's Industrial Heritage Project and Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, National Park Service).