

FRANKFORD ARSENAL, Building 40
South of Tacony Street between Bridge
Street and the tracks of the former
Pennsylvania Railroad
Philadelphia
Philadelphia County
Pennsylvania

HAER No. PA-74B

HAER
PA,
51-PHILA,
693-B-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
MID-ATLANTIC REGION, NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19106

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Location: South of Tacony Street between Bridge Street and the tracks of the former Pennsylvania Railroad
Philadelphia, Philadelphia County, Pennsylvania

UTM: NW: E494120N4428480
NE: E494780 N4428750
SE: E495120 N4428260
SW: E494190 NEE28140
Quad: Frankford

Date of Construction: 1816-1976

Present Owner: Arsenal Associates
P.O. Box 26767
Elkins Park, PA 19117

Present Use: Vacant, industrial, offices

Significance: Established in 1816, the Frankford Arsenal served for three decades as a depot for the storage and repair of arms, accoutrements, and ammunition for the United States Army. From 1849 to 1976, the arsenal served as the nation's principal developer and manufacturer of small arms and artillery munitions. Frankford Arsenal pioneered mchanized production of munitions and developed numerous important innovations in ordnance and precision instruments. Technological innovations introduced at Frankford Arsenal made important contributions to the mechanization of American industry and the implementation of interchangeability and mass production techniques.

Project Information: This documentation was undertaken in August 1988 in accordance with the Memorandum of Agreement among the General Services Administration, the Pennsylvania State Historic Preservation Office, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative measure prior to the demolition of several buildings at Frankford Arsenal.

Patrick O'Bannon
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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107

Constructed in 1864 as a machine shop, Building 40 is associated with the earliest manufacturing operations at Frankford Arsenal. Numerous additions to the original building reflect the growth and development of the arsenal throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The original portion of Building 40 is a two-story T-plan brick building with a full basement. An open areaway on three sides of the main block provides access to the basement, which is constructed of coursed, rough-faced ashlar sandstone walls with a sandstone watertable. The building measures approximately 107 feet by 50 feet, with a wing to the east measuring approximately 40 feet by 52 feet. The original building has a slate covered hip roof with a corbeled brick cornice and an ornamental brickwork frieze. The original building had an open plan with Phoenix iron columns.

Additions to the original building include a board and batten Primer Dry House, constructed immediately to the north of the east wing in 1889. The Dry House was originally a free-standing building with a brick foundation. It was connected to the main block of the building at a later date by a flat-roofed passageway. By 1894, the east wing of the building had been extended approximately 37 feet to the east and a wing, measuring approximately 41 feet by 32 feet and designed as a boiler house, attached to the north side of the wing. Subsequent additions to the building were small in scale. The building additions largely have open plan interiors.

The present building has rectangular window openings, with sandstone lintels and sills, in the main block. Most window openings have nine-over-nine double-hung sash. Some secondary-story windows are infilled with glass block. A pyramidal-roofed cupola is centrally located on the roof of the main block. Interior alterations have divided the building into a series of rooms and corridors.

Serving as a machine shop, the construction of Building 40 facilitated the manufacture of metallic cartridges at the arsenal. The building later housed a shrapnel shop and a small arms ammunition factory. In 1899, the cartridge factory was moved to Building 215 and much of Building 40 was converted to new uses. In 1900, the basement housed the shrapnel shop, a machine shop occupied the first floor, and the second floor housed a fuze shop. In 1906, the drafting room, which had been installed in the former primer dry house, was removed from the building in order to provide more space for the sight shop. That same year, the building's boiler house was converted into a brass foundry. By 1913, the building functioned primarily as a stock building.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

John Milner Associates, "Historical and Archeological Survey of Frankford Arsenal," West Chester, PA: John Milner Associates, 1979.

Report prepared for the Department of the Army, Baltimore District, Corps of Engineers, Baltimore, Maryland. Copies on file at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Free Library of Philadelphia, and the Philadelphia Historical Commission.

For complete overview of site, see IIAER No. PA-74.

