

**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: Westfield Plate Company  
 Other names/site number: International Casket Hardware Co./Dow Mechanical Corporation  
 Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_  
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing \_\_\_\_\_)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 33 North River Street  
 City or town: Enfield State: CT County: Hartford  
 Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

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

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

\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_ statewide      \_\_\_ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_ A      \_\_\_ B      \_\_\_ C      \_\_\_ D

_____ <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	_____ <b>Date</b>
_____ <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	
In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ <b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	_____ <b>Date</b>
_____ <b>Title :</b>	_____ <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

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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:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 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>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY: manufacturing facility

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Industrial Loft

**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick

### 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.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The Westfield Plate Company Factory is a four-story brick industrial loft constructed in 1893 to replace the original factory built for the Westfield Plate Company that was destroyed by fire the previous year. The building is located in the in Thompsonville, a neighborhood in northwest Enfield, Hartford County, Connecticut. between the Connecticut River and the tracks of what was then known as the Hartford-Springfield Railroad (now Amtrak). The southern section of the building is four stories in height and the northern section, which includes a boiler house at the far northern end is three stories in height. The process of creating various products related to the funeral trade ranging from coffin hardware to burial garments required distinct separations between production areas. This was achieved through the construction of a tall narrow building employing multiple stories and firebreaks. Owing to both its location and function, the building has a distinctive vertical emphasis which is highlighted by its design. The prominent piers separating each bay add to the verticality of the building and the decorative extruded brickwork along the parapet is notable for its workmanship. The building retains a high level of integrity relative to its design, material and workmanship on both the interior and exterior. The location, feeling and association also remains intact due to the surrounding area which includes views of the rail line, the Connecticut River and the Bigelow Carpet

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### Narrative Description

#### Setting



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The Westfield Plate Company Factory is located at 33 North River Street on a compact 0.18-acre parcel in the village of Thompsonville, Enfield, Connecticut (Figure 1). The building is the only one on the site and is oriented in a north-south direction and parallel to the river and rail line. It fills the majority of the paved lot on which it sits. The Westfield Plate site is bounded on the west by North River Street; on the north by an open parcel and the terminus of North River Street; on the east by the tracks of rail line; and on the south by an open parcel dotted with modern industrial buildings and the intersection of Main Street and North River Street. The site is east of the Connecticut River, which is located down a small embankment west of North River Street. The National Register-listed Bigelow-Hartford Carpet Mills Historic District is located to the east and remnants of late-nineteenth century worker housing dating from the same period are located to the south.<sup>1</sup> The industrial village of Thompsonville, located along the major transportation lines of the Connecticut River and the former Hartford-Springfield railroad, grew up around the carpet mills in the middle of the nineteenth century. The topography of area includes slopes down from the from east to west. The Bigelow property is clearly visible on an elevated slope to the east and levels off to include the raised rail line and the location of the building before continuing to slope down to meet the banks of the Connecticut River on the west.<sup>2</sup>

## Exterior Description

The Westfield Plate Company Factory is a red brick, pier-and spandrel industrial loft constructed in 1893 and completed in 1894 (Photograph 1). The property consists of a single building separated into two adjoining rectangular blocks separated by firebreaks. The south block is four stories and measures 35 feet by 139 feet in plan, while the north block is three stories and measures 35 feet by 33 feet. The exterior is characterized by brick piers separating each bay and topped by a highly decorative corbeled brick cornice with parapets accentuating the end walls. The decorative brickwork on the cornice and parapets suggests a Renaissance Revival influence. The load bearing brick walls are laid in a Flemish stretcher bond pattern with seven courses of stretchers alternating with one course of Flemish bond (alternating header and stretcher bricks). The windows on all elevations are paired six-light casement sash topped by a five-light transom and set within single, segmental arched openings (many of these openings are now boarded shut on the exterior). Each window has a narrow brick sill composed of header bricks. The muntins and original glass are missing from some windows, but many of the original frames and sashes are intact. The roof has a shallow pitch and is covered in a mixture of EPDM-rubber and tar and gravel. Of note are two “ghost signs”<sup>3</sup>; one on the southern elevation and the second on the eastern elevation facing the railroad tracks.

Each bay of the façade (South elevation) is divided by full-height, projecting brick pilasters. The pilasters rise to meet the wide, flat, shouldered portion of the corbeled cornice at the top of the

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<sup>1</sup> Records of the National Park Service, 1785 – 2006, National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Program Records, 2013 – 2017, National Register of Historic Places and National Historic Landmarks Program Records: Connecticut, Connecticut SP Bigelow-Hartford Carpet Mills, 83001256.

<sup>2</sup> The rail line was raised as part of a system-wide set of safety improvements reducing at-grade crossings in the first decades of the twentieth century.

<sup>3</sup> Ghost signs are faded advertisements of building signs that are barely legible to the naked eye yet represent an important historic use of a building.

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third story. The parapet on the outer bays are decorated by a line of crenellations topped by a patchwork panel of extruded brick. The central portion of the parapet is taller and features the same decorative motif found on the side bays. This is further embellished by a terracotta plaque set above the window that reads "1893" in relief (Photograph 2). The entirety of the roof and parapet are lined by a projecting brick cornice and topped by a line of header bricks (this carries around to the east and west sides of the parapet).

The building is immediately adjacent to the raised bed of the railroad track on the east.<sup>4</sup> On the façade (south elevation), the main entrance is located in the westernmost bay, and is nearly one-half story lower than the window openings to the east. Each bay has four vertically stacked, segmental-arch wood-framed windows with corbelled brick sills except the westernmost bay, which has only two windows above the main entrance. Slightly shorter openings are found on the second story and short, square openings are found on the bottom level of the two eastern bays. The main entrance includes a modern steel door with a brownstone threshold. The doorway is topped by a tall, brick spandrel inset with a decorative extruded brickwork panel above. This is all topped by an arched transom (covered with plywood on the exterior) that obscures a 19-light lunette window with a central hopper (Photograph 3). Above the entrance there is a barely legible, faded white painted sign that reads "OFFICE/WESTFIELD/PLATE CO./CASKET HARDWARE and DRY GOODS," over a second sign that reads "INTERNATIONAL CASKET HARDWARE CO."

The west (side) elevation includes the north and south blocks of the factory building. The southern block is fifteen bays across its four stories (Photograph 4). Each bay has one opening per story, all of which have been boarded up with plywood. The section of spandrel between the windows is recessed on all but the first story (Photograph 5). The only variation in the window pattern is an oriel window located on the second story at the far southern end. This wood-framed window contains three double-hung, one-over-one sash set beneath a tin-clad roof decorated by a band of dentil molding running beneath the windows (Photograph 6). Remnants of a rusted steel fire escape system, with extant landings on the second, third, and fourth stories remains in place. There are two full-height projecting brick piers between the twelfth and thirteenth, and fourteenth and fifteenth bays from the south of the southern block which correspond to interior fire walls and brick parapets along the roof. Doorways are located on the first story at the fifth and tenth bays from the south. A retractable steel door is located in the eleventh bay of the second story and is installed above a bricked-in, arched opening. Doors are also found on each story of the eighth bay. The northern block of this elevation includes four bays arranged on three stories (Photograph 7). There is a door on the ground floor of the northernmost bay, and shipping access doors on all three stories of the third bay from the north. The corbelled brick cornice extends beneath the rooflines of both blocks on this elevation.

The north (rear) elevation is dominated by the square base of a central stack containing remnants of an earlier round chimney. There is one bay located west of the stack and two on the east. Windows are limited to the second and third stories (Photographs 8 and 9). There is a rowlock-arched doorway on the ground floor of the westernmost bay. Set inside the doorway is a

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<sup>4</sup> The track was originally built at grade and the building was built after the line had been in operation for nearly 50 years.

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deteriorated, non-original wood door topped by what appears to have been a rectangular transom. Bricks are missing above this doorway. East of the stack, the bricks on the first story have been parged with cement. A brick parapet rises above the roof on the north elevation and is topped by a projecting corbelled brick cornice, which is also missing near the former location of the stack (Photograph 10). Evidence of roof sealant along the top edge of the first story and along the stack, as well as a review of Sanborn maps illustrate that there was once a single-story, wood-framed addition attached to this elevation. This is further corroborated by an exhaust port on the stack's west wall. The top story of the southern block is visible above the north end of this portion of the building. It has a metal-clad swing door at the center flanked by an arched window on each side, both of which are infilled with cinder blocks.

The east (side) elevation has the same fenestration pattern as the west elevation. All the windows on this elevation have been boarded shut (Photograph 11). The first story is partially below grade due to the embankment of the railroad track bed, which was built up sometime after the building was constructed. Despite this, the arched openings are still clearly visible. An arched door is located on the second story of the fifth bay from the south which served as the railroad siding in the past. Of note is the faded sign lining the roofline painted with white letters along the roofline that reads, "WESTFIELD PLATE CO. CASKET HARDWARE AND DRYGOODS".

## **Interior**

The Westfield Plate Company building contains 22,925 square feet arranged on four floors. The floors are divided by firebreaks into four areas on the first and second levels and three areas on the third and fourth levels. The first and second stories contain offices, work and storage rooms in the southern section of each level. The central sections on these floors are open manufacturing spaces. The northern third of the building is divided in half with the boiler house occupying the northernmost section on the first and second levels. The third and fourth floors are completely open, having been reserved for various manufacturing operations. They are served by a hoist bay located on the southwest corner of the middle block. Stairs are found at the southwest corner of the southern block on the first and second stories and the northeast corner of the southern and central blocks on the third and fourth floors.

The interior is characterized by large, open spaces with a single, central row of painted timber posts supporting heavy timber cross beams. Other interior features include double-layered fireproof decking with a subfloor of diagonally laid wood slats under tongue-and-groove floors. Exterior walls are painted brick with the original window sash visible on the interior. These are composed of a pair of casement windows each topped by a row of five transom lights. Some original equipment such as a mechanical hoist bay, manufacturing implements, automatic steel fire doors, ventilation units, control panels, wooden doors, and remnants of line shafts to power equipment remain intact.

Offices occupy the south end of the first and second and stories. These spaces retain more elaborate decorative details such as paneled walls, wide decorative moldings and finished plaster walls and ceilings. The main entrance leads into the first-floor office space through a small room located at the southwest corner of the building. The low-ceilinged space is carpeted with painted brick walls

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some of which have been parged with concrete. The window on the east wall is filled with glass blocks (Photograph 12) and the lower half of the wall is double-width (partially below grade). To the northeast there is an enclosed storage room with bench shelving and cabinets attached to a modern sheetrock wall. It is lit by banks of modern fluorescent lights (Photographs 13). To the northwest, there is a small utility room with tall ceilings and sheetrocked walls. The back end of a large safe protrudes through the wall into this space which also includes a porcelain utility sink and access to a modern utilities room. Door openings in this area are framed with molded trim (Photograph 14). Moving north, the eastern half of this space is divided along the central row of posts by later 20<sup>th</sup> century partitions consisting of sheetrock walls. This area features low ceilings, some of which are clad in composite material. The exterior walls are painted brick and the space is lit by a combination of short windows and fluorescent lighting. A storage room is located at the southeast corner (Photographs 15 and 16). Further north, there is an open area with exposed brick walls containing the remnants of a forging or casting station as evidenced by the double-width wall and evidence of exhaust channels (Photograph 17). The northernmost quarter of this floor contains the boiler house, which is separated by a firewall. It contains a double-height boiler room with brick walls and a wooden ceiling lined by various pipes and ductwork (Photograph 18). There are access doors on the east and south walls as well as windows at the height of the second story. While the boiler has been removed, the round exhaust openings are still visible as well as one timber king-post truss at the center supporting the main ceiling beam (Photograph 19). This truss system spans the open space eliminating the need for a central support posts.

The offices on the south end of the second story feature a mix of formally finished rooms and utilitarian spaces. The less elaborate spaces have walls lined with beadboard wainscoting topped by a chair rail and doorways framed by wide, molded trim (Photograph 20). A stairway near the southwest corner of the building leads past a small coat closet and bathroom. These rooms have linoleum flooring and simple cabinetry with horizontal shiplap walls. These room/corridor leads into a larger office space meant to house several desks with paneled walls and tall ceilings clad in beadboard. The walls are topped by a line of crown molding along the southern wall. Windows in this space are recessed and trimmed by wide, molded frames (Photograph 21). A combination of early incandescent and fluorescent lighting is found throughout this space.

To the west of this space is the manager's office, marked by wood floors, walls lined with wood paneling below plaster walls and six-panel doors (Photograph 22). In addition, there is a brick fireplace topped by a narrow wood mantel and paneled cabinets lined by pilasters on the east wall (Photograph 23). A window seat is set within the bay window on the west wall (Photograph 24). The south wall of this office is dominated by the arched transom window found above the main entrance. It is set within a raised wall of paneled wainscoting. The window opening is lined by wide, molded trim set above a carved architrave (Photograph 25). Push-button brass lighting panels are found throughout this space. The north wall has a door that leads to the factory floor, which, like all of the doors throughout the room, has a denticulated architrave. The ceiling is plaster with cased beams. To the north of the manager's office is a tile-floor bathroom with a circular utility sink operated by a pedal and two toilet stalls (Photograph 26). To the north of the main office space is a smaller office space with wainscoting and molded trim on the openings. There are three safes found throughout the office areas on the first and second floors: one in the office on the first story, one in the manager's office and one in the shared office space. An area just off the shared office

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space at the southeast corner has a floor supervisor's office with large windows on the north wall looking out onto the production floor. It features built-in bench cabinets and a finished wood floor (Photograph 27).

The manufacturing space on the second story is divided into three sections laterally by brick fire walls and automatic metal-clad closing fire doors (Photograph 28). Brick exterior walls are visible in the open manufacturing area, with green paint on the bottom half and white on the top half. This paint pattern is continued on the chamfered support pillars lining the center of the space (Photograph 29). A circuit box and large, lighted ventilation hood are found on the north wall of the first manufacturing section (Photograph 30). The second section has a stairwell to the upper stories in the northeast corner. The vertical slat door to the stairwell opens with what appears to be a casket handle (Photograph 31). The third section has an opening in the floor for a hatchway in the northeast corner accessible via a door held by iron counterweights and leading to a stairwell opening lined by steel pipe railing and chain link. (Photograph 32).

The third story consists of open manufacturing space divided by brick fire walls and metal clad rolling fire doors (Photograph 33). All rooms have wood floors and ceilings, though some areas along the exterior walls have deteriorated and missing floorboards. All brick walls and wooden support pillars are painted green on the bottom half and white on the top half. An elevator shaft/hoist bay, with an electric belt drive beside it, is located at the southwest corner of the central portion of the second, third and fourth stories (Photograph 34 and 36). There is a bathroom at the southwest corner of the southern third of the building.

The fourth story stretches across the southern block of the building and is divided into two open spaces at the north and south by a brick wall and an automatic closing fire door. Floors and ceilings are wood, and walls are painted brick (Photograph 35). A door on the northern wall provides access to the roof of the three-story northern block. The northern room has shelving along its eastern wall, and an opening to the roof of the fourth story on the ceiling near the western wall. The roof is accessed by a wooden ladder (Photograph 37). Wooden storage racks extend from the ceiling beams and run parallel to the exterior walls.

## **Integrity**

The Westfield Plate Company Factory retains integrity of location, setting, feeling and association because its position adjacent to the rail line and beside the Connecticut River. The surrounding industrial complexes and dense residential neighborhoods associated with them have also remained relatively unchanged since the factory was built, particularly the association with the Bigelow Mills. The floor plan remains intact with only removable walls added to the original configuration. This plan reflects the original design and uses of the space which incorporated the production of everything from cast metal objects to fine silk linings and linen burial garments. The division of administrative and production spaces, the ways of moving products between these spaces and the ways of creating distinct work areas all remain intact. The door leading to the rail siding is in place on the second story, which recalls the importance of the building's proximity to the rail line. The original stairwells, walls, floors and ceilings and early mechanical systems in the main manufacturing areas are all in place and the administrative areas retain decorative moldings,

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paneling, doors and trim, all of which exhibit a high level of design and workmanship. A bay window extends from the eastern side of the office space to further underscore the importance of the administrative spaces. The building has not been expanded and apart from the loss of the chimney stack on the northern wall, remains intact. Overall, the condition of the building is good to fair, though there are signs of deterioration of the brick on the exterior walls, some of the floors and many of the windows require significant repair.

Windows throughout are still intact with five light transoms set above paired, hinged casement windows. Although many are in need of repair, nearly all are intact and in situ. Historic postcards of the building show that it has changed very little from its appearance around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 15).

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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

ARCHITECTURE

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1894-1952

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1894: Building completed

\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Cole, Nelson S. (construction manager)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



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

The Westfield Plate Company Factory is significant under Criteria A and C at the local level in the categories of Industry and Architecture. Under Criterion A, the property contributed to the industrial village of Thompsonville which developed around the production of carpet in the middle of the nineteenth century and the transportation routes of the Connecticut River and the rail line of the New York, New Haven and Springfield Railroad. The Westfield plant represents the manufacturing of a wide variety of products including casket trimmings and hardware created in response to changing burial practices in America. The mid-range products supplied by Westfield Plate were created for middle-and working-class families, who were, for the first time, afforded the opportunity to bury their dead according to the customs of their country of origin in a dignified and public fashion. The factory is also significant under Criterion C at the local level as an example of an industrial loft built to accommodate the many processes involved in producing late nineteenth and early twentieth century burial products ranging from casket handles and plaques to fine burial garments and casket linings. This is represented in the very shape of the building itself which is vertical in nature and separated by heavy firebreaks to accommodate the production requirements on a narrow lot constrained by the rail line and the Connecticut River. Its location adjacent to the rail line also reflects the range of distribution for Westfield Plate's products and its level of visibility, which required a high degree of exterior finish as displayed in the elaborate brickwork in the cornice and the faded signage advertising the business name. The building retains many of its original features such as original firebreaks and fire doors, circulation systems between floors, lift and pulley systems, and the perhaps most notably, the formal office spaces which reveal a high level of design and workmanship. The Period of Significance begins in 1894 when the building was constructed and ends in 1952 when the company ended production at this plant.

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

**Criterion A: Industry**

The Westfield Plate Company property meets Criterion A in the category of industry as an important contributor to the built landscape of the industrial village of Thompsonville during the late nineteenth and first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Enfield was primarily an agricultural community throughout much of the nineteenth century specializing in tobacco production after the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The industrial village of Hazardville developed around 1835 along the Scantic River in the southeastern portion of town and focused on the manufacture of gunpowder. Thompsonville, in northwestern Enfield became the most densely settled area of town by the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century thanks to the development of a carpet plant located along Freshwater Brook first started by Orrin Thompson in 1829. The Westfield Plate site. is one of several remaining in the area that represent local manufacturing, but is the best example related to the production of casket hardware and trimmings. It is also the best-preserved example of a building that housed the processes of

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producing, storing and shipping various coffin trimmings and therefore required distinct areas to accomplish a wide variety of jobs.

The Westfield Plate Company was originally founded in Westfield, Massachusetts in the 1870s as a manufacturer of casket hardware.<sup>5</sup> Over the next decade, as the operation expanded, company officers began exploring potential sites for a larger factory. In 1884, they decided upon the village of Thompsonville in Enfield, Connecticut located just 20 miles to the southeast. Thompsonville was a growing industrial village established in 1829, when Suffield, Connecticut native Orrin Thompson founded a carpet mill along the eastern side of the Connecticut River on a tributary known as Freshwater Brook. By 1914, Thompson's mill had become the Bigelow-Hartford Carpet Company and was among the largest manufacturers of its kind in America, second only to Alexander Smith and Sons' in New York.<sup>6</sup> Thompsonville's carpet industry attracted both skilled and unskilled immigrant labor to the area and drove the local economy; the town's population increased from 800 residents in 1840 to 2,500 by the end of the Civil War. The village of Hazardville developed along the Scantic River after a gunpowder plant was started there in 1835. Powder Hollow became the second largest area of population in Enfield, which was otherwise known for its agricultural economy. By 1900, Enfield's population rose to include nearly 7,000 residents, most of whom lived and worked in Thompsonville.<sup>7</sup>

The Bigelow-Hartford Carpet plant was located along the line of the Hartford and New Haven Railroad which began operation in 1844 and provided direct freight connections to New Haven, Hartford and Springfield. Thompsonville's proximity to the Connecticut River made it attractive to a variety of industrial concerns by the middle of the nineteenth century. One publication in 1866 reported, "The thriving village contains 1 large manufactory of carpeting and rugs, one of shirts and drawers, 1 brewery and 1 small cigar factory".<sup>8</sup> An 1869 Baker & Tilden map of the area shows that it was a lively commercial district that included the Hartford Carpet Company, a Railroad freight depot, the Mathewson & Gray Brewery, the C.E. Prices Coal Yard, Niles Pease's Tin Shop, and LoveJoy's Ferry (Figure 7). After the New York, New Haven and Hartford Railroad was merged in 1872, the "Springfield Line" offered direct access to the markets and ports of New York City.

By the 1880s, there were several industries providing caskets and related mortuary goods in Thompsonville such as the T. Pease & Sons Company (a wholesale lumber company that provided lumber of all kinds including caskets and ice boxes) and the New England Glass Burial Company (N.E.G.B.C., Co.), which specialized in the production of metal and glass caskets. Undertakers like John Loring and Edwin King also provided caskets, funeral supplies, burial clothing and badges. The most prominent, if short-lived manufacturer of funerary goods was the N.E.G.B.C. Co., which was founded in 1881 by Ohio native Joseph Askins in a two-story brick building at 90 Prospect Street in Thompsonville (extant). The company produced ornate metal and glass caskets

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<sup>5</sup> Further research is required to find the founding date of this business in Westfield – efforts so far has proven unsuccessful.

<sup>6</sup> Roth, Matthew and John Herzan. National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, Bigelow Carpet Mills (NR83001256), Hartford, CT: Connecticut Historical Commission, 1983. Section 8, p 4.

<sup>7</sup> <https://portal.ct.gov/SOTS/Register-Manual/Section-VII/Population-1900-1960>

<sup>8</sup> *Gazetteer of the Manufactures and Manufacturing Towns of the United States* (J. M. Bradstreet & son, 1866), 30.

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that allowed the deceased to be viewed from the exterior. Askins' had acquired a patent in 1877 to "improve burial cases" and used this to attract investments from local businessmen including William Calderwood, John L. Houston, Dr. Loren H. Pease, Theodore I. Pease, Niles Pease, and Edson W. Lindsey.<sup>9</sup>

The New England Glass Burial Company's products were distributed by several local undertakers according to a copy of *The Thompsonville Press* dating from January of 1882.<sup>10</sup> These included Wm. Mulligan of Thompsonville who boasted of providing the "finest stock of Undertaker's supplies in Town"; and J. J. Merwin of Poquonack (Windsor). Several advertisements included illustrations of the N.E.G.B.C., Co. products (Figure 8). Despite its unusual offerings, the company foundered during the depressions of the early 1880s. The prohibitive costs related to producing, shipping and selling delicate glass caskets forced them to close the factory for good in 1884.<sup>11</sup>

That same year the Westfield Plate Company of Thompsonville was incorporated as a joint-stock company with George T. Mathewson as a principal owner and director and Albert H. Mathewson as Treasurer.<sup>12</sup> The Mathewson brothers were part of a prominent family of entrepreneurs engaged in the local coal, wood and ice business. They were also partners in the Mathewson Brothers & Co. Brewery started by their father John Mathewson on lot adjacent to the current location of the Westfield Plate building. John Mathewson, owned much of the land in the area between the rail line and the river, which he had purchased just over a decade prior from the Hartford Carpet Company.<sup>13</sup> Albert H. Mathewson went on to serve as treasurer and manager of Westfield Plate Company for 14 years, after which time he became President.<sup>14</sup> After the failure of the N.E.G.B., Co., several of that company's shareholders saw Westfield Plate as an opportunity to rebuild their investment. In 1885, the officers of the Westfield Plate Company raised \$50,000 to construct a new industrial loft along the tracks of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad and across from the line's freight depot.<sup>15</sup>

In 1892, the Westfield Plate Company's building footprint was expanded further to include a steam boiler and office. The brick factory shown on the 1892 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map had a very similar location and configuration to the one that stands today but was only two stories in height and built on a smaller scale. The Sanborn Map from 1892 also shows that the second floor of the

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph Askins, Improvements on Burial Cases, Canada CA7863A, issued September 4, 1877, <https://patents.google.com/patent/CA7863A/en?inventor=joseph+askins&before=priority:18780101>.

<sup>10</sup> *Thompsonville Press*, "Go to Mulligan's" January 12, 1882, 3.

<sup>11</sup> Enfield, Connecticut, Old Town Hall Museum, New England Glass Burial Company Display.

<sup>12</sup> Connecticut, *Special Acts and Resolutions*, 198. George T. Mathewson President of the state Fish and game commission for over 12 years. George T. Mathewson was a member of the state legislator from 1891-1893 and was a member of the Thompsonville Board of Trade and of the Businessmen's Association. Secretary of the school board and member of the masonic temple. And served as director of the Westfield Plate Company. WPC Incorporated September 22, 1884

<sup>13</sup> Enfield Land Records, Volume 361: Page 67.

<sup>14</sup> *The Challenge of Change: Three Centuries of Enfield* 207-208.

<sup>15</sup> Enfield, Connecticut, Old Town Hall Museum, Historic Map Collection; *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Thompsonville, Hartford County Connecticut* (Sanborn Map Company, June 1885), Library of Congress, [https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn01187\\_001/](https://www.loc.gov/item/sanborn01187_001/).

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building was occupied by the Parson's Printing Company, printers of the *Thompsonville Press* (Figure 9)<sup>16</sup>

On August 9, 1892, a fire broke out in the molding department, taking with it "...two-thirds of the building and the contents."<sup>17</sup> Damage in the remaining portion of the building was severe and the entire structure was demolished. Westfield Plate set up a temporary workspace in the T. Pease & Son's Mill, another local manufacturer of casket fabric and hardware. Follow-up articles by the *Hartford Courant* suggested the company "will remain there till a decision is reached as to whether it will rebuild or accept tempting offers to locate elsewhere". As for the Parson's Printing Company, they chose to relocate altogether moving to "new quarters near the post office".<sup>18</sup>

In June 1893, the *Hartford Courant* reported on the status of Westfield Plate Company's building decision, writing that "a very flattering offer of a [monetary] bonus and site from the city of Springfield, Massachusetts was considered, but not accepted, and it was finally decided to rebuild their factory".<sup>19</sup> The new plant was rebuilt on the site of the old factory "under the supervision of N. S. Cole" and enlarged in both length and width to nearly four times the size of the original building extending south to "the land of the railroad company recently purchased by William H. Burbank".<sup>20</sup> The building was described as being "divided into three sections with "practically fire-proof partitions." It was expected that the building would be open by August 1, 1893.

The Westfield Plate Company specialized in the production of hinges, engraved plaques, casket handles, cap lifters, escutcheons, and thumb screws. Each of these elements were made from a combination of ferrous and alloy metals, many of which were molded and plated.<sup>21</sup> The earliest Sanborn Fire Insurance Map showing the second and current iteration of the building at this site dates from 1905 (Figure 10). It shows that the floorplan of the building as it stands today remains unchanged with three main fire breaks dividing the building into sections laterally. The southern third of the building was used as a press room on the first story, shipping was completed on the second floor, product assembly took place on the third and storage was held on the fourth. The middle third of the building had casting department on the first floor, a sand buffing station on the second floor, stock and buffing on the third floor and a plating operation on the fourth floor. The northern third of the building was divided in two by another brick fire wall used to separate the southern half containing the machine shop on the first floor, engraving operations on the second floor, and wood shops on the third story from the boiler room which were located at the far northern end of the building. The boiler room was an open space that was three stories in height (as it is today). The Sanborn Map notes that the building was constructed using "Mill Construction" and

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<sup>16</sup> *Sanborn Fire Insurance Map from Thompsonville, Hartford County Connecticut* (Sanborn Map Company, 1892); The Parsons Printing Company was incorporated as a joint-stock company on April 4, 1892.

<sup>17</sup> Thompsonville Press, "Local News", August 10, 1893, 2.

<sup>18</sup> "THOMPSONVILLE: Westfield Plate Company Starts Up-- The Rev. T. D. Martin the New Rector," *The Hartford Courant* (1887-1922); *Hartford, Conn.*, August 23, 1892, sec. News of the State.

<sup>19</sup> "THOMPSONVILLE: Westfield Plate Company to Rebuild the Burned Factory," *The Hartford Courant.*, January 10, 1893, sec. News of the State.

<sup>20</sup> *Thompsonville Press*, May 4, 1893, 3.

<sup>21</sup> Debi Hacker-Norton and Michael Trinkley, *Remember Man Thou Art Dust: Coffin Hardware of the Early Twentieth Century*, Columbia, SC: Century Chicora Foundation, 1984.

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that the heat and power were provided by steam, the lights were powered by electricity and the fuel used was coal. A coal shed was located directly north of the building but is not extant.

In July of 1900, an agreement was made by seven concerns engaged in the manufacturing of silver for caskets and coffins to combine their efforts into a conglomerate known as the American Silver and Casket company. The members included the Gridley Company of North Haven, the United States Casket Hardware Co. of New Haven, the Morgan Silver Plate Company and the Strong Manufacturing Co. of Winsted, Eldridge & Co. of Taunton, Massachusetts and the American Casket Hardware Co., and Textile Manufacturing Co. of Westfield, Massachusetts. This merger began with a capital stock of \$500,000. Matthewson was elected vice president of the new company and Herbert Vietts held a place on the executive board. The goal of the merger was to “reduce expense and thus united meet competition with a better front than the individual houses have done or could do.”<sup>22</sup> A contemporary article in the *Hartford Courant* referred to the merger as “the Casket Trust”.<sup>23</sup>

Despite having to recover from several fires, the Westfield Plate Company was busy at the beginning of the twentieth century, at times running more hours than the nearby carpet manufacturers.<sup>24</sup> In 1902, Westfield Plate also acquired the Peabody Dry Goods Company, which allowed the firm to provide coffin linings and trimmings as well as burial garments (Figure 11).<sup>25</sup> The company sold directly to undertakers rather than to a middleman. As the popularity and demand for casket trimmings increased, Westfield Plate Company and other casket hardware manufacturers were absorbed in corporate mergers. By 1906 the Westfield Plate Company in Thompsonville was one of only four operations in Connecticut listed as “Coffin Trimming Mfs.” by the *New England Business Directory and Gazetteer*. The others being Sargent & Co. in New Haven, and the Morgan Silver Plate Co. and the Strong Manufacturing Co., both in Winsted.<sup>26</sup>

The demand on the Westfield Plate Company in the early twentieth century was the result of a unique period in American history in which the company operated. The objects made and sold at the Westfield Plate Company factory represent a shift from plain, handmade items to mass produced decorative casket hardware. These items were available for the first time to the working and middle classes, allowing even those of modest means to express their grief through an elaborate final resting place for their loved ones. Between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, longstanding ideology regarding funerary rites intersected with the advent of mass production and a rising consumer culture spurred on by the creation of a middle class. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, American mortuary practices were influenced by a dissolved sense of family brought about by nascent urbanization and industrialization. Influenced by the Romantic Movement in England and the stark confrontation with widespread mortality on American soil as a result of the Civil War, the “beautification of death” brought a highly decorative and

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<sup>22</sup> “Local News and Notes” *Thompsonville Press*, July 5, 1900, 2.

<sup>23</sup> “The Casket Trust” *Hartford Courant*, July 3, 1900, 12.

<sup>24</sup> *Hartford Courant* February 16, 1916, 11.

<sup>25</sup> “Means More Workers in Thompsonville” *The Thompsonville Press*, December 25, 1919, 1.

<sup>26</sup> *The New England Business Directory and Gazetteer*, Boston: Sampson & Murdock Company, 1906, 1504.

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romanticized view of death and heaven.<sup>27</sup> Standing in stark contrast to the somber iconography associated with colonial death practices, this new movement materialized itself in beautiful and elaborate grave markers, caskets, and other materials associated with funerals. These markers filled rural or “garden cemeteries” that were constructed by some of the most notable landscape designers of the day to provide a place of contemplation and even recreation for the living while memorializing the dead.

Before the mid-nineteenth century, complicated funerary practices were reserved for those wealthy enough to afford the materials associated with an elaborate burial service. Coffin trimming manufacturers such as the Westfield Plate Company mass produced inexpensive, but elaborate casket hardware (including handles, moldings, and iconography) casket linings and funeral garb.<sup>28</sup> Surveys of nineteenth-century caskets have revealed a strong distribution of these objects across socially and economically diverse groups, suggesting that highly decorative funerary objects became “the embodiment of a shared [American] ideology.”<sup>29</sup> Westfield provided the engraved plates and decorative elements such as handles, moldings, crosses and other religious symbols that were attached to the caskets as well as the linings for the boxes. They also produced more practical items such as lid lifters, thumb screws and hinges.

Trade catalogs and designs associated with the Westfield Plate Company’s late-nineteenth-century casket hardware reflects this diversity as well. Several patents were associated with the firm’s employees including A. H. Thomas, who invented a winding machine for covering corrugated casket handles with silk.<sup>30</sup> A patent for the “Hercules” coffin handle designed by William Klein in 1896 (Figure 12). Klein, had previously worked for the Sargent Company in New Haven and at Meriden Britannia Company before joining Westfield in 1888.<sup>31</sup> This handle folded down against the casket and had a core of steel enclosed in a soft metal “for a pleasing finish”<sup>32</sup>. Decorative plaques were another specialty. Along with Civil War veteran and fraternal symbols, Westfield Plate Company produced elaborate crucifixes and other iconography associated with Catholicism, suggesting that there was a strong market for these materials among newly arrived immigrant groups from southern and eastern Europe (Figures 13 and 14).<sup>33</sup>

The practice of producing highly decorative, yet inexpensive goods was not unique to the casket hardware industry. Advances in metal-alloy production and plating techniques allowed many companies to produce goods that appeared more expensive than they were. Mass production of German silver flatware, mass clock mechanisms, nickel-plated dinnerware, and other related goods

<sup>27</sup> Charles O Jackson, *Passing: The Vision of Death in America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977); Barbara J. Little, Kim M. Lanphear, and Douglas W. Owsley, “Mortuary Display and Status in a Nineteenth-Century Anglo-American Cemetery in Manassas, Virginia,” *American Antiquity* 57, no. 3 (1992): 397–418, <https://doi.org/10.2307/280930>; Edward L. Bell, “The Historical Archaeology of Mortuary Behavior: Coffin Hardware from Uxbridge, Massachusetts,” *Historical Archaeology* 24, no. 3 (1990): 54–78.

<sup>28</sup> Connecticut, *Public Documents of the State of Connecticut* (order of the General Assembly, 1909), 51.

<sup>29</sup> Edward L. Bell, “The Historical Archaeology of Mortuary Behavior: Coffin Hardware from Uxbridge, Massachusetts,” *Historical Archaeology* 24, no. 3 (1990): 54–78.

<sup>30</sup> *Thompsonville Press* February 25, 1886, 3.

<sup>31</sup> Yale University Sheffield Scientific School Class of 1883, 75.

<sup>32</sup> *Thompsonville Press* March 3, 1904, 2.

<sup>33</sup> Many design drawings of casket hardware were found in the top loft of the building.

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allowed a new segment of Americans to possess objects normally reserved for the wealthier classes. The Westfield Plate Company's products are an important example of how that democratization of consumerism took hold in the tangible objects associated funeral rites. The mass-produced material culture of funerals also represents a sociological shift toward the development of a funeral industry that revolved around personal choice.

In what the author Stephen Prothero referred his as the "consumers' last rite", American funerals became progressively more individualized as the twentieth century moved on. People had an increasing choice of casket hardware followed by a choice of professional funeral directors and homes, funeral clothing, flowers, vases, and other materials we commonly think of as associated with modern funerals.<sup>34</sup> This shift was reflected in the work taking place at Westfield Plate during the period. The *Hartford Courant* reported in February of 1908 that, "The company [is] working overtime" and "rushed with orders" with over 150 employees operating the factory 13 hours per day.<sup>35</sup>

The 1910 Federal census for Enfield shows that Westfield Plate employed both men and women in almost equal numbers at their factory. Most of the men worked as buffers, platers and molders of the hardware and women worked as cutters and sewers of the burial garments and linings. On one short stretch of Walnut Street in Thompsonville Westfield Plate employed three adult brothers from the McCarthy family (Jeremiah, John and Michael), all of whom worked as platers and trimmers. The McCarthy's neighbor and head of her household Annie Baker worked as a trimmer to support herself and her three children; and William Redette, an immigrant born in Scotland worked as a molder at Westfield. Most employees lived in the area surrounding the carpet factory in densely built single and multi-family housing. While a relatively small number when compared to the 13,000 workers employed by the Bigelow Carpet Mills in the 1930s, Westfield Plate provided employment to skilled workers that tended to be first- or second-generation immigrants from England, Scotland and Ireland. The *Thompsonville Press* ran a story in their July 1911 "Industrial Edition" which stated that it "occupied a notable position in the business world" and had "customers in nearly every city in the United States and ten traveling men engaged in caring for its trade."<sup>36</sup> The President at the time was Charles Munn (1848-1917), of Springfield, MA who was not only a successful businessman, but an author of several popular novels. Vice-President W. H. Seeley resided in Chicago and General Manager Herbert L. Vietts lived in nearby Suffield, CT. The article went on to praise the company's "exceptionally good freight facilities, ensuring prompt shipment of orders, and the modern up-to-date character of the entire plant...the Westfield Plate Company is regarded by the trade as a leader of the first rank."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Harold Mytum, "Artifacts of Mortuary Practice: Industrialization, Choice, and the Individual," in *The Importance of British Material Culture to Historical Archaeologies of the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Alasdair Brooks (University of Nebraska Press, 2015), 274–304.

<sup>35</sup> *Hartford Courant*, February 26, 1908, 15.

<sup>36</sup> *Thompsonville Press*, Industrial Edition, July 1911, 6.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

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In 1915, the *Hartford Courant* reported that the factory had been running from 7:00 am to 9:00 p.m., giving employment to nearly 150 hands, and that those hours were expected to continue for some time to come.<sup>38</sup> In 1918, casket companies nation-wide became overwhelmed with demands for orders. They were dealing not only with mass repatriation as soldiers' bodies were returned from the first World War, but also with the enormous death toll wrought by the Spanish Flu pandemic. The War Industries Board ordered casket makers to manufacture only "plain caskets" and directed manufacturers to "confide their product to the most simple types until further notice." The order was noted as having been received by the National Casket Company.<sup>39</sup>

On Christmas Day 1919, the *Thompsonville Press* reported that the International Casket Hardware Company of Meriden would merge with the Westfield Plate Company. The companies planned to transfer all production to the Thompsonville location, "The equipment from the Meriden plant will be transferred to the Thompsonville, and it is also probable that employees of the Meriden factory who so desire will be given employment here".<sup>40</sup> The same article noted the important position of the company, stating that since 1884 Westfield Plate "had been one of the town's leading industries." Just one year later in 1920, the company came under the control of the National Casket Company, which held over thirty branches throughout various parts of the country.

Demand for the casket hardware representing Westfield's high-quality craftsmanship declined after the 1930s.<sup>41</sup> Following the Depression, Victorian-inspired designs fell out of favor and were replaced with simpler and more streamlined caskets decorations. Although mainly an aesthetic shift, it had consequences for Westfield Plate Company, then part of the larger National Casket Company. Elaborate cast hardware required skilled labor to operate forgers, sanders, and other finishing equipment. Simpler designs required fewer skilled hands, and many workers' positions were thereby replaced with stamp machinery. Shortages of crucial metals, such as antimonial lead during the World War II also forced work stoppages for months at a time at the plant.<sup>42</sup> The machine shop remained open for war work thanks to government contracts, but in 1942, the company began making hardware for a time out of non-strategic plastics in order to keep their employees working.<sup>43</sup> Eventually, production of both casket hardware and ornaments were moved by the National Casket Company to much less expensive mass production facilities. Smaller operations such as the one operating out of the Thompsonville location could no longer compete, and the company closed its doors at the Westfield Plate shop for good on June 30, 1952.<sup>44</sup>

Just two years later the building was occupied by the Dow Mechanical Corporation. The company was incorporated in 1946 by founder Walter K. Dow and was known for its production of "internal length comparator gauges and stubs which permits checking the dimensions of machine work to

<sup>38</sup> *Hartford Courant*, June 10, 1915, 12.

<sup>39</sup> "Fancy Coffins Under Ban," *The Indianapolis News*, October 21, 1918, 2.

<sup>40</sup> "Westfield Plate Company," *Thompsonville Press*, December 25, 1919, sec. Vol. XL, No. 35.

<sup>41</sup> Stephen Prothero, "Resurrection and the Resurrectionists," in *Purified by Fire*, 1st ed., A History of Cremation in America (University of California Press, 2001), 67–102, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/j.ctt1pnnhg>, 8.

<sup>42</sup> "Casket Company Must Conclude Operations" *Hartford Courant*, January 25, 1942, 36.

<sup>43</sup> "Hardware Being Made of Plastics" *Hartford Courant*, June 27, 1942, A17.

<sup>44</sup> "Casket Hardware Company Will Discontinue June 30" *Hartford Courant*, June 4, 1952, 18A.



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extraordinary accuracy”.<sup>45</sup> Dow was perhaps best known from a mail order item known as the Teen-O-Meter “a speed-control device that can be easily set for a maximum speed”.<sup>46</sup> Dow Mechanical continued to operate out of the Thompsonville location until 2005 when the building was sold to the Town of Enfield.

### **Criterion C: Architecture**

The Westfield Plate Company building is significant under Criterion C as a specialized industrial facility purpose-built for making, selling and transporting casket trimmings, linings and burial garments. The design incorporates typical fire-resistive, late-nineteenth-century industrial construction methods such as load-bearing masonry walls and slow burning timber construction for the floors. A series of automatic fire doors and brick fire breaks were used to separate the numerous processes undertaken to produce various goods. The tall, narrow design with relatively short ceilings allowed for the processes to be separated by those fire breaks and by each floor, while and hoist shaft and elevator allowed for goods to be easily transferred between areas. The short ceilings also reflect a change in lighting brought about by the common usage of electricity after 1884. The 1905 Sanborn clearly states that the lighting was electric powered and the power was provided by a steam engine powered by coal. The highly decorative cornice, extruded brick transom above the public entrance and elaborate corporate office are all intact and character defining features of the building. Finally, the building’s location directly on the rail line (served by a door on the east side of the building) is significant as it allowed for the finished goods to be easily transported directly from the plant to locations around the country (Figure 15).

The process of producing, storing and shipping various coffin trimmings required distinct areas for a wide variety of jobs. The Sanborn map from 1905 shows that the southern portion of the building was retained for the offices, storage, and assembly as well as the press room. These were all areas that needed to be kept clean and separate from the manufacturing operations. According to Historian Betsy Hunter Bradley, isolation of the machine shop was a common practice in buildings with multiple uses.<sup>47</sup> In the case of Westfield Plate, it was placed on the ground floor of the northern third of the building to minimize the vibrations from the machines and the movement of the dust they created. Casting, sand buffing, finishing and plating areas all took place in the middle third of the building. Woodworking and engraving took place in the northern third along with the machine shop which was located next to the boiler room to ensure the effective transfer of power from the boiler to the machine engines. The boiler house occupied three stories and was divided from the main space at the north far end of the building due to the constant danger posed by potential explosion of the steam powered boiler.<sup>48</sup> The division of workspaces by function required extensive fireproofing with automatic fire doors and a strict division of space for each job particularly when sewing burial shrouds or casket linings. Products were moved between floors

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<sup>45</sup> *Index of Trademarks Issued from the United States Patent Office* (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1950), 339., *The Challenge of Change: Three Centuries of Enfield*, 208.

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<sup>47</sup> Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 44.

<sup>48</sup> Bradley, 49.

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using a hoist bay and elevator located in southern part of the central block of the building. Finally, the factory's location directly on the rail line allowed for direct shipment from the loading dock at the southeast corner of the building onto waiting freight cars.

The architect and/or engineer of the Westfield Plate Company building is unknown, but Enfield mason Nelson S. Cole of River Street in Thompsonville oversaw the construction of the project and was likely responsible for the elaborate design of the brickwork on the facade. While the building is typical of pier and spandrel mill construction, the highly decorated façade and projecting bay or oriel window on the southwestern corner speak to an eclectic mix of Renaissance Revival and Arts and Crafts decorative elements. Symmetrically placed, segmental arched windows, full-height pilasters topped by corbelled and crenellated cornices and tall parapets decorated with extruded brick spandrels all speak to a building that was meant to be aesthetically pleasing as well as utilitarian. Its location, next to the rail line and the river, also meant that it was highly visible to passing traffic and therefore served as a kind of advertisement to passersby. Two faded, painted signs, commonly referred to as "ghost signs" dating from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century remain visible on the southern and eastern elevations. These are important decorative elements as so many similar painted signs have been lost from commercial and industrial buildings across the state.

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### Newspapers

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“THOMPSONVILLE” *Hartford Courant*, February 26, 1908, p. 15.

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*Thompsonville Press*, February 25, 1886, p. 3.

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*Thompsonville Press*, March 3, 1904, p. 2.

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*Thompsonville Press*, Industrial Edition, July 1911, p. 6.

“Westfield Plate Company.” *Thompsonville Press*, December 25, 1919, sec. Vol. XL, No. 35.

“Westfield Plate Company to Rebuild the Burned Factory,” *The Hartford Courant*, January 10, 1893, sec. News of the State.

“Westfield Plate Company Starts Up-- The Rev. T. D. Martin the New Rector,” *The Hartford Courant*, August 23, 1892, sec. News of the State.

### **Repositories**

Enfield, Connecticut, Old Town Hall Museum, Archives, Displays and Map Collection

Town of Enfield, Assessors Records

Town of Enfield, Land Records and Deeds

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### **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: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreege of Property** 0.18

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: 41.999794 | Longitude: -72.604693 |
| 2. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 3. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |
| 4. Latitude:           | Longitude:            |



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**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 nominated property includes the entire parcel at 33 North River Street designated by the Enfield Assessor's Office as Map 007, Lot 12, Parcel ID 10367 (Figure 2)

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the historic factory building and is consistent with the historic property boundary.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Stacey Vairo and Michael Forino,  
organization: FuturePast Preservation  
street & number: 17 Hard Hill Road  
city or town: Woodbury state: CT zip code: 06798  
e-mail svairo@gmail.com  
telephone: 203.217.5795  
date: June 13, 2020

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**Additional Documentation**

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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.)

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for nominations 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.). We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for each response using this form is estimated to be between the Tier 1 and Tier 4 levels with the estimate of the time for each tier as follows:

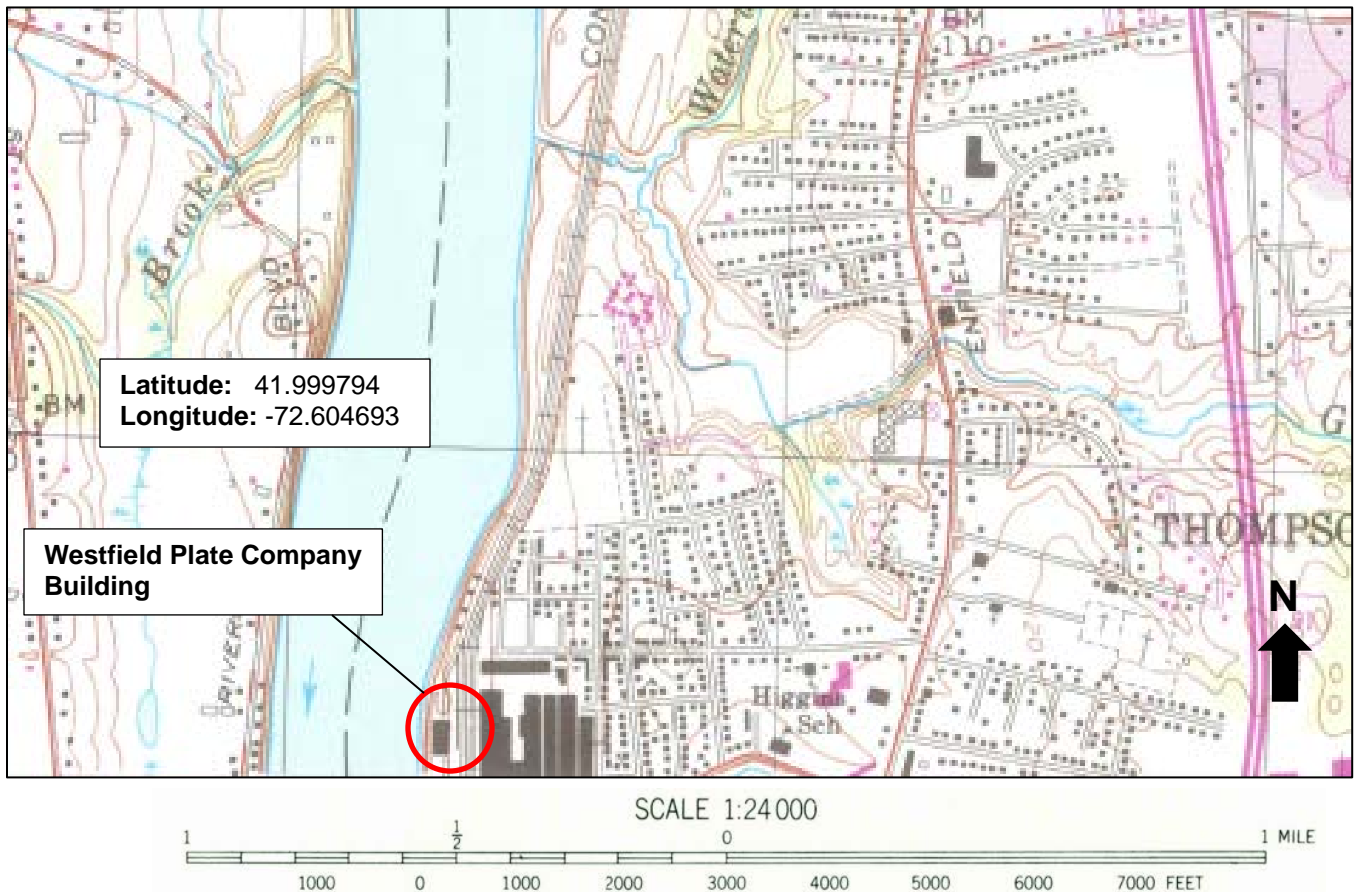
Tier 1 – 60-100 hours  
Tier 2 – 120 hours  
Tier 3 – 230 hours  
Tier 4 – 280 hours

The above estimates include time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and preparing and transmitting nominations. Send comments regarding these estimates or any other aspect of the requirement(s) to the Service Information Collection Clearance Officer, National Park Service, 1201 Oakridge Drive Fort Collins, CO 80525.

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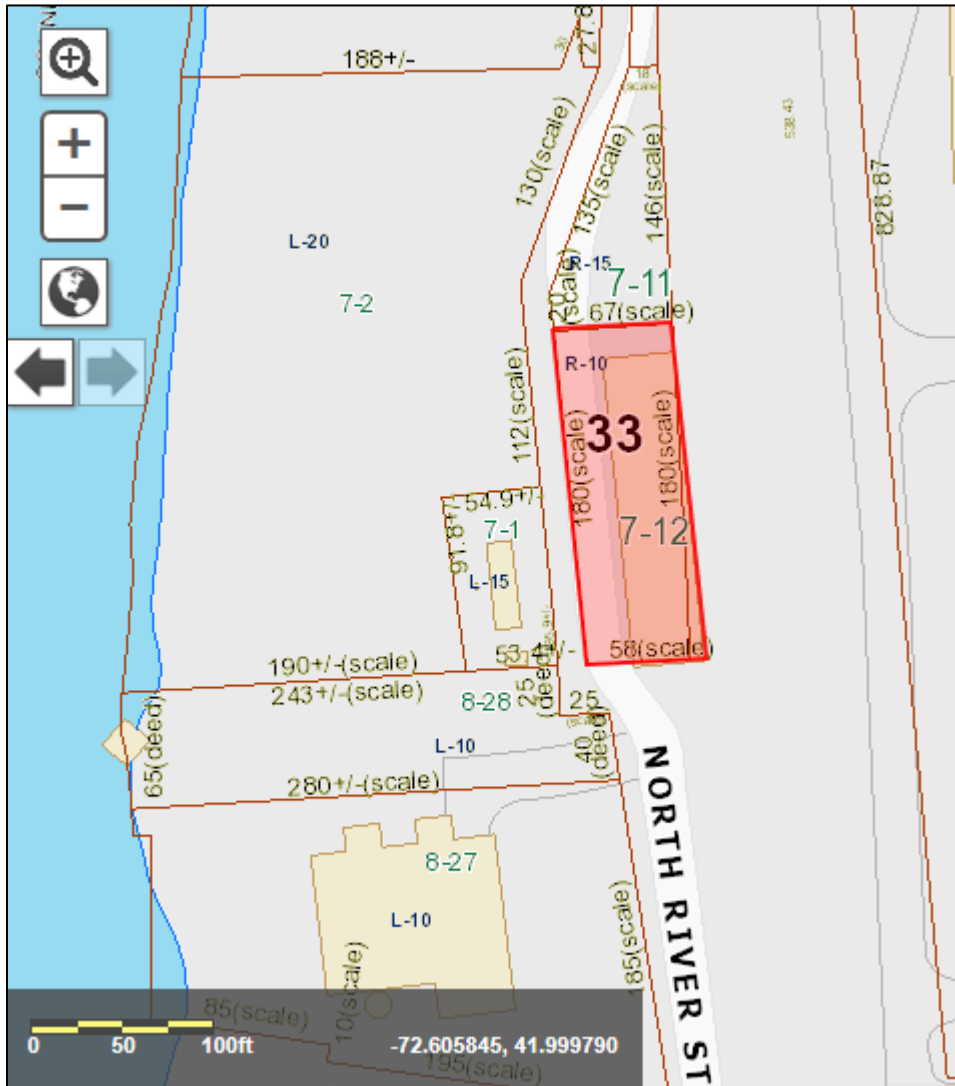
**Figure 1. Location of property shown on USGS Springfield South Quadrangle, 7.5 Minute Series, Scale 1:24000.**



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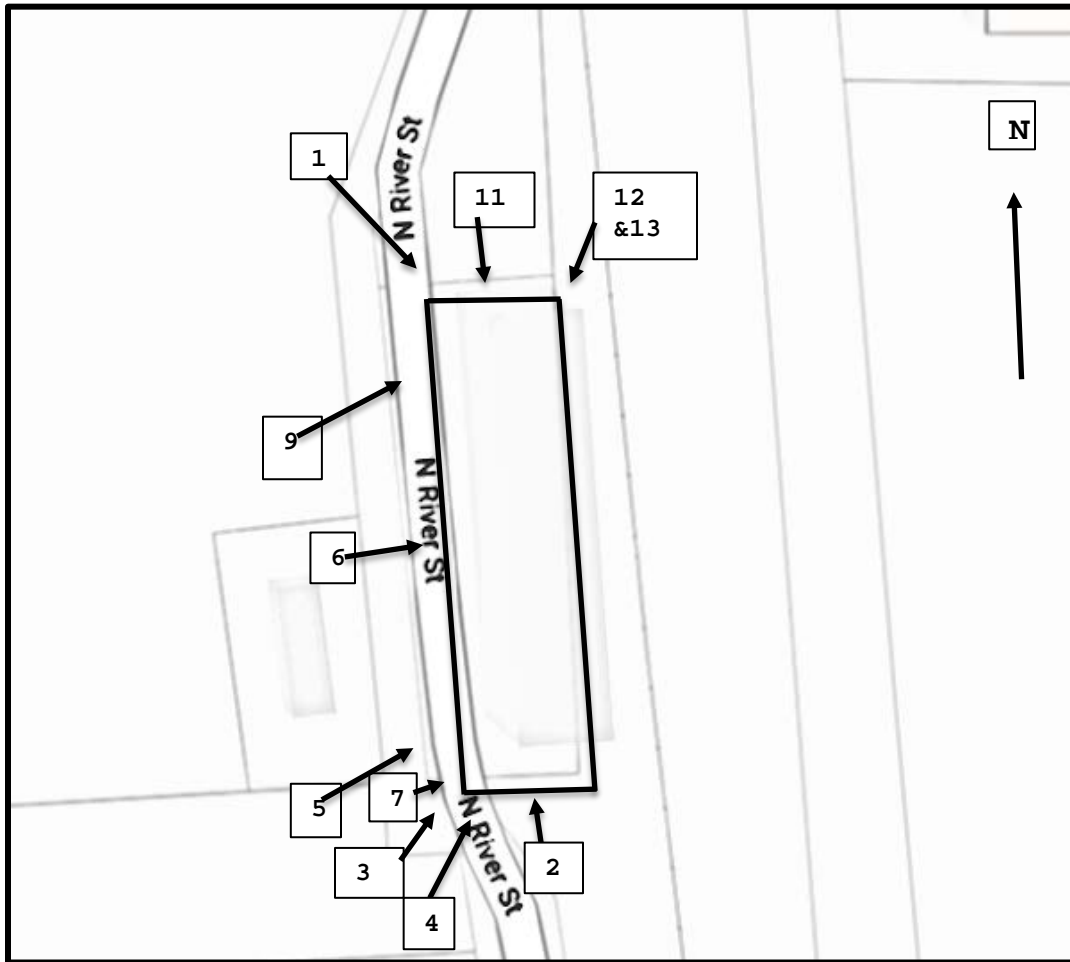
**Figure 2: Town of Enfield GIS Map showing the Westfield Plate building boundary of the parcel/nominated property**



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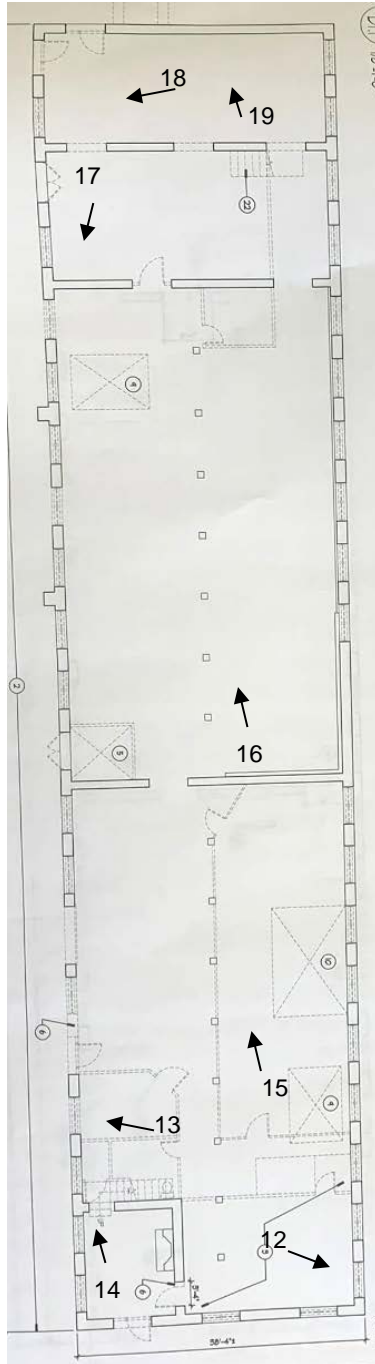
**Figure 3: Sketch Map and Exterior Photo Key for Westfield Plate Company Factory**



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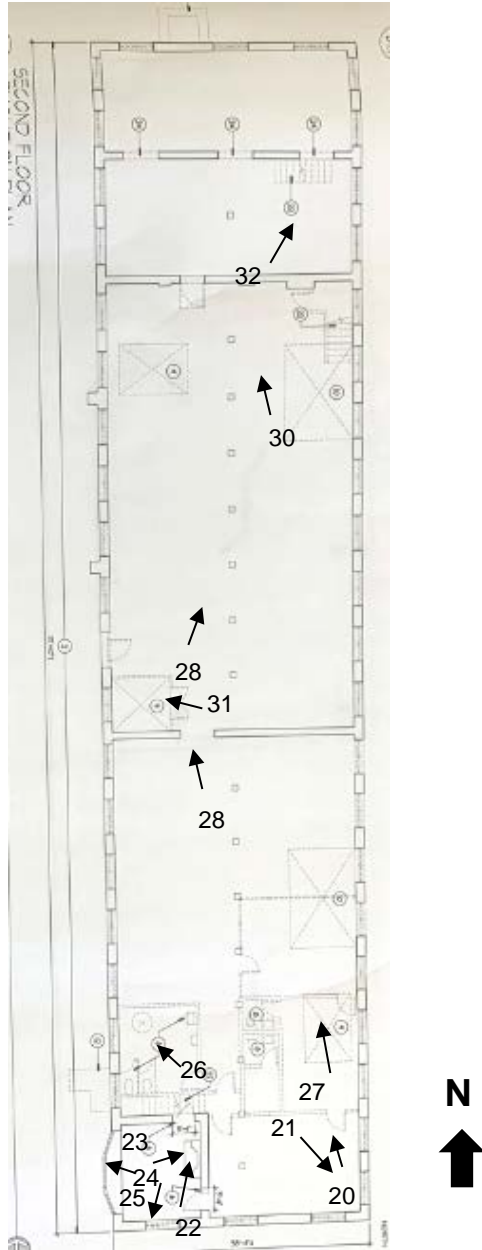
**Figure 4. First Floor Photo Key and Plan**



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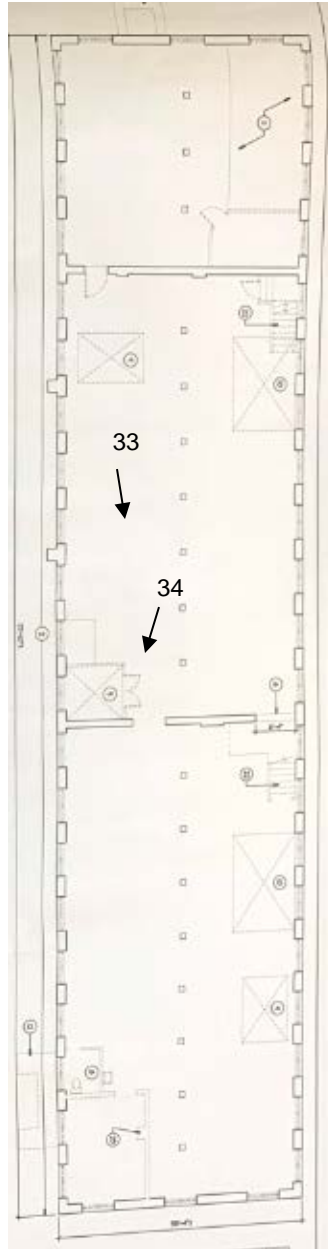
**Figure 5. Second Floor Photo Key and Plan**



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**Figure 6. Third Floor Photo Key and Plan**

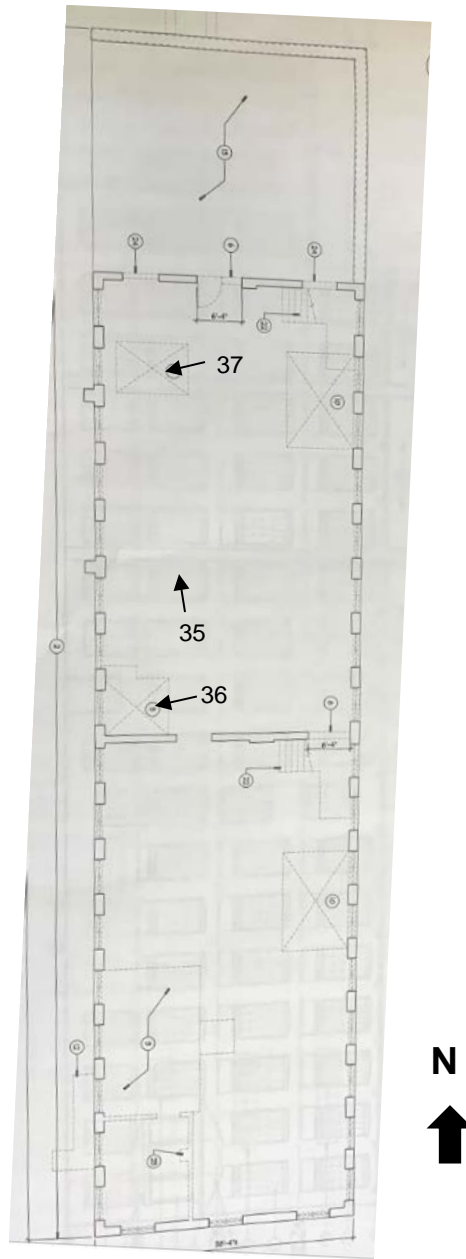




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**Figure 6. Fourth Floor Photo Key and Plan**



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**Figure 7. Baker & Tilden Map of Enfield showing the dense industrial and residential development of Thompsonville at that early date (red oval shows future location of WPC).**



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**Figure 8. Illustration of a New England Glass Burial Case Company product in the Thompsonville Press advertisements section for undertaker J. J. Merwin (1882).**

**J. J. MERWIN,**  
Agent for Poquonock and Vicinity for  
the sale of  
New England Glass Burial Case Co.  
**Glass-Metallic**

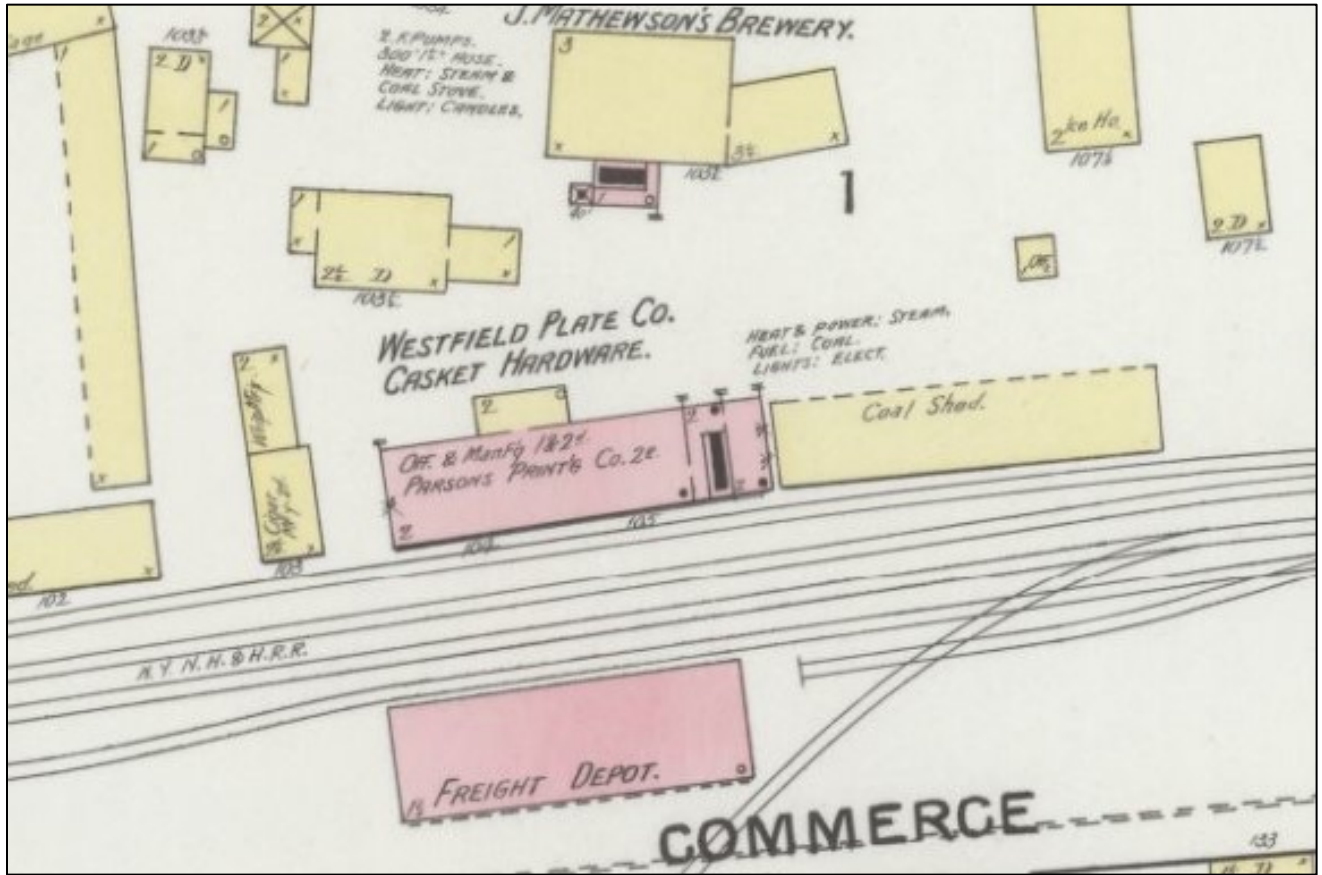


**Burial Cases.**  
A full assortment of  
**Caskets,**  
*Shrouds, and*  
**Funeral Supplies.**  
Hearse and Carriages Furnished.  
POQUONOCK, CONN.

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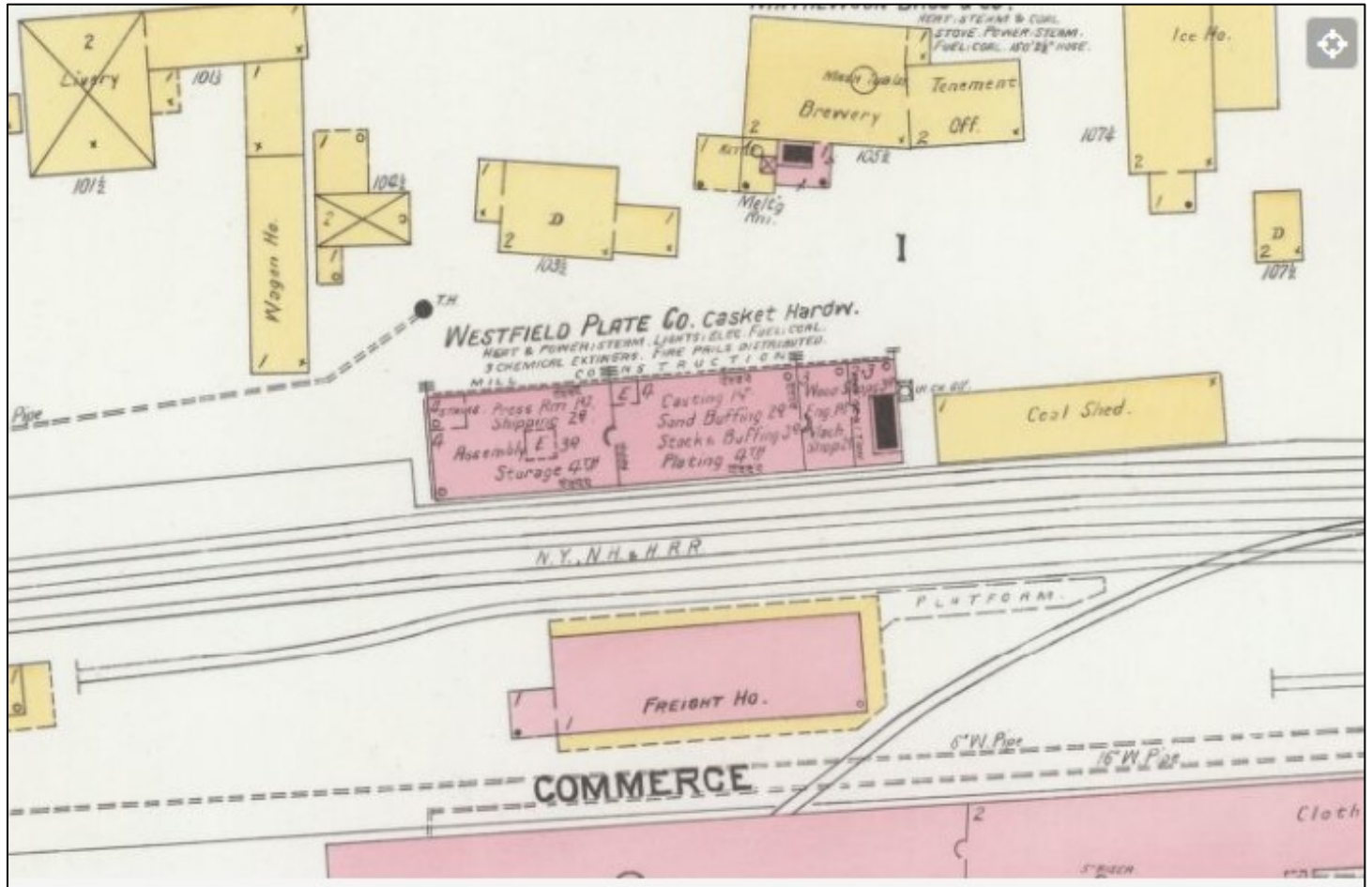
**Figure 9. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Thompsonville, 1892.**



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Figure 10. Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of Thompsonville, 1905.

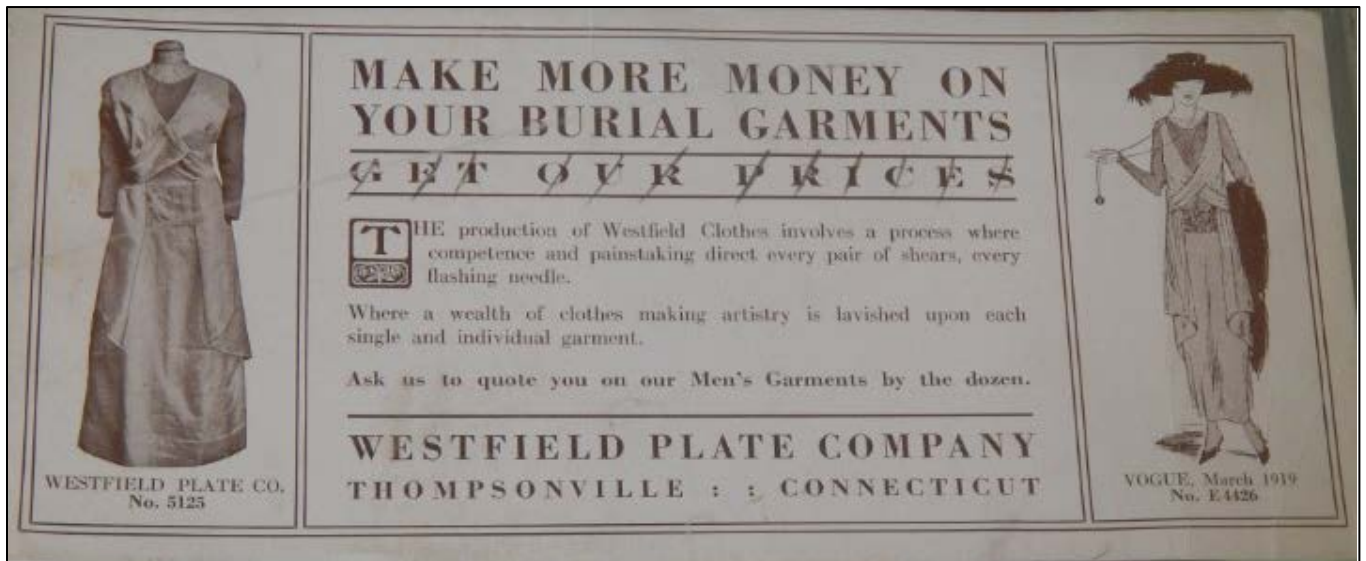




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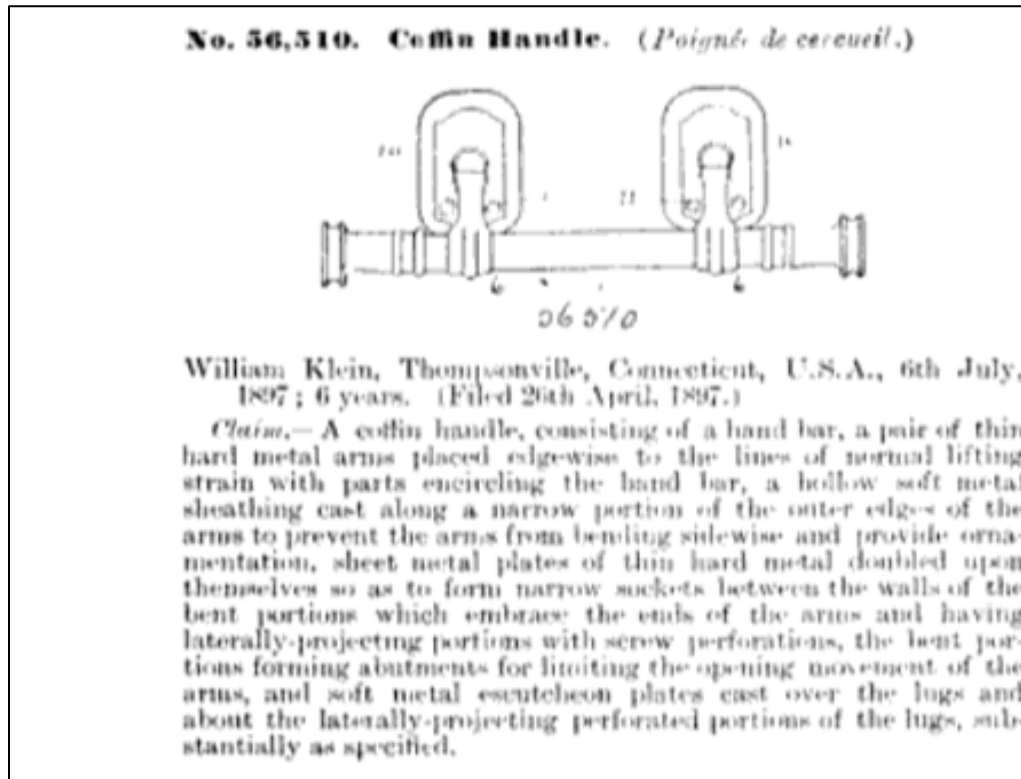
**Figure 11. Burial Garments Advertised by Westfield Plate Company (Enfield Historical Society Museum Exhibit)**



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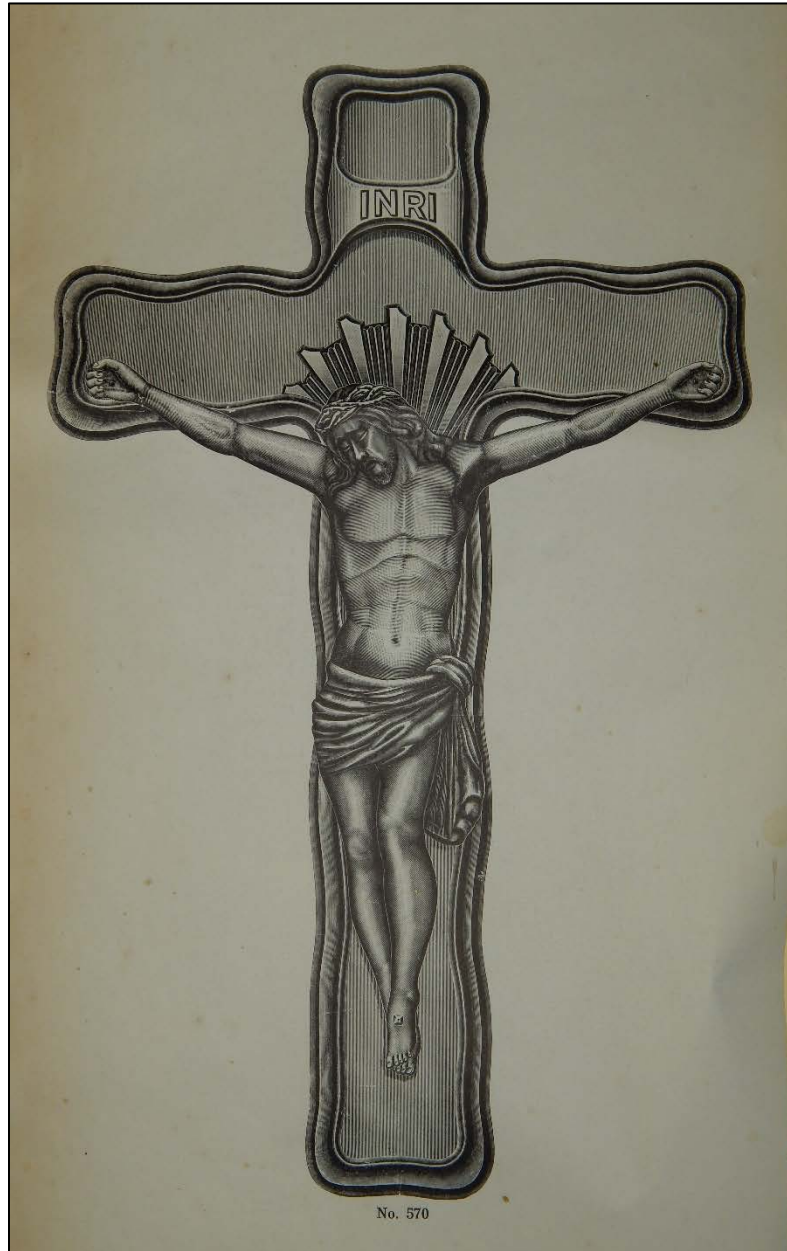
**Figure 12. Patent for the Hercules Casket Handle, William Klein (1897)**



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**Figure 13. Image of sketch for casket trimming found on the floor of the factory floor in 2019**





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**Figure 14. Image of sketches for various casket trimmings found on the factory floors in 2019**



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**Figure 15. Postcard showing the Westfield Plate Company Building ca, 1900 (University of Connecticut Archives, Railroad History).**



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### **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.

### **Photo Log**

Name of Property: Westfield Plate Company Factory

City or Vicinity: Thompsonville, Enfield

County: Hartford

State: Connecticut

Photographer: Elizabeth Correia and Stacey Vairo, Heritage Consultants, LLC for FuturePast Preservation

Date Photographed: November 15, 2019

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

Southern elevation (façade) and western elevation (side). Camera facing northeast.  
Photograph 1 of 37

Southern Elevation (façade) brickwork detail. Camera facing north.  
Photograph 2 of 37

Southern elevation (façade) entryway detail. Camera facing north.  
Photograph 3 of 37

Western elevation and southern elevation (façade). Camera facing northeast.  
Photograph 4 of 37

Detail of western elevation of southern block. Camera facing east.  
Photograph 5 of 37

Detail of bay window at southwest corner. Camera facing northeast.  
Photograph 6 of 37

Detail of northern block western elevation. Camera facing northeast.

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Photograph 7 of 37

Northern elevation of northern block and western elevation. Camera facing southwest.  
Photograph 8 of 37

North and eastern elevations. Camera facing south.  
Photograph 9 of 37

Detail of enclosed smokestack along northern elevation. Camera facing south.  
Photograph 10 of 37

North and eastern elevations showing the "ghost sign" near the roofline of the eastern elevation. Camera facing south.  
Photograph 11 of 37

Interior first floor. Southeastern office. Camera facing southeast.  
Photograph 12 of 37

First floor interior storage room along western wall. Camera facing west.  
Photograph 13 of 37

Interior first floor utility room. Camera facing north.  
Photograph 14 of 37

First floor interior space. Camera facing north.  
Photograph 15 of 37

First floor interior space. Camera facing north from center of room  
Photograph 16 of 37

First floor remnants of casting/blacksmith operation. Camera facing south.  
Photograph 17 of 37

Interior of northern boiler room. Camera facing west.  
Photograph 18 of 37

Interior of northern boiler room. Detail of support truss.  
Photograph 19 of 37

Second floor interior office space. Camera facing north.  
Photograph 20 of 37

Second floor interior detail. Camera facing southeast.  
Photograph 21 of 37

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Second floor interior. Manager's office at southwestern corner. Camera facing north.  
Photograph 22 of 37

Second floor interior. Manager's office fireplace. Camera facing east.  
Photograph 23 of 37

Interior detail of bay window. Camera facing west.  
Photograph 24 of 37

Interior shot of boarded transom window. Camera facing south.  
Photograph 25 of 37

Second floor interior bathroom. Camera facing northwest.  
Photograph 26 of 37

Second floor interior. Camera facing northeast.  
Photograph 27 of 37

Second floor. Automatic fire door (seen throughout). Camera facing north.  
Photograph 28 of 37

Second floor. Open manufacturing space. Camera facing northeast.  
Photograph 29 of 37

Second floor fuse panel and electrical service. Camera facing north.  
Photograph 30 of 37

Second floor. Detail of casket handle repurposed for door.  
Photograph 31 of 37

Second floor interior hatchway in northeast corner of southern block. Camera facing northeast.  
Photograph 32 of 37

Third floor interior space. Camera facing south.  
Photograph 33 of 37

Third floor interior hoist bay. Camera facing southwest.  
Camera facing 34 of 37

Fourth floor interior. Camera facing north.  
Photograph 35 of 37

Fourth floor interior hoist bay shaft.  
Photograph 36 of 37

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Fourth floor roof exit. Camera facing west.  
Photograph 37 of 37





Southern elevation (façade) and western elevation (side). Camera facing northeast.  
Photograph 1 of 37





Southern Elevation (façade) brickwork detail. Camera facing north.





Southern elevation (façade) entryway detail. Camera facing north.  
Photograph 3 of 37





Western elevation and southern elevation (façade). Camera facing northeast.





Detail of western elevation of southern block. Camera facing east.





Detail of bay window at southwest corner. Camera facing northeast.  
Photograph 6 of 37





Detail of northern block western elevation. Camera facing northeast.





Northern elevation of northern block and western elevation. Camera facing southwest.





North and eastern elevations. Camera facing south.

Photograph 9 of 37





Detail of enclosed smokestack along northern elevation. Camera facing south.  
Photograph 10 of 37





North and eastern elevations showing the “ghost sign” near the roofline of the eastern elevation. Camera facing south.





Interior first floor. Southeastern office. Camera facing southeast.  
Photograph 12 of 37





First floor interior storage room along western wall. Camera facing west.  
Photograph 13 of 37





Interior first floor utility room. Camera facing north.  
Photograph 14 of 37



First floor interior space. Camera facing north.  
Photograph 15 of 37





First floor interior space. Camera facing north from center of room  
Photograph 16 of 37



First floor remnants of casting operation. Camera facing south.  
Photograph 17 of 37





Interior of northern boiler room. Camera facing west.





Interior of northern boiler room. Detail of support truss.  
Photograph 19 of 37





Second floor interior office space. Camera facing north.  
Photograph 20 of 37



Second floor interior detail. Camera facing southeast.  
Photograph 21 of 37





Second floor interior. Manager's office at southwestern corner. Camera facing north.  
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Second floor interior. Manager's office fireplace. Camera facing east.  
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Interior detail of bay window. Camera facing west.  
Photograph 24 of 37





Interior shot of boarded transom window. Camera facing south.  
Photograph 25 of 37



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Photograph 26 of 37





Second floor interior. Camera facing northeast.  
Photograph 27 of 37





Second floor. Automatic fire door (seen throughout). Camera facing north.  
Photograph 28 of 37





Second floor. Open manufacturing space. Camera facing northeast.



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Second floor. Detail of casket handle repurposed for door.  
Photograph 31 of 37





Second floor interior hatchway in northeast corner of southern block. Camera facing northeast.  
Photograph 32 of 37





Third floor interior space. Camera facing south.  
Photograph 33 of 37





Third floor interior elevator. Camera facing southwest.  
Camera facing 34 of 37





Fourth floor interior. Camera facing north.  
Photograph 35 of 37





Fourth floor interior elevator shaft.  
Photograph 36 of 37



Fourth floor roof exit. Camera facing west.  
Photograph 37 of 37