Summary

The Phoenix American Cob Pipe Factory at Second and Vine Streets in Boonville, Cooper County, Missouri, is locally significant under Criterion A for INDUSTRY. From completion in 1912 until 1953, the factory housed the capacious production of the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Company, one of Missouri's three largest manufacturers of corn cob pipes by the late 1940s. Since Missouri was then responsible for the world's corn cob pipe production, this made the factory one of the three largest global producers as well. Even before the factory was opened, the corn cob pipe was a peculiar product of Missouri, spawned by advances in techniques for transforming abundant agricultural byproducts into affordable smoking devices. German immigrant Charles Oscar Strutz had manufactured pipes in Chicago before relocating to Missouri and becoming majority owner of the nascent Phoenix American Cob Pipe Company. Under Strutz' leadership, the company relocated away from Washington Missouri, rich with competitors, to Boonville, where the locals raised capital and labor was more readily in supply. In Boonville, the company truly hit its stride, launching popular new products, raising output and thriving in an industry where most small competitors were defunct by the middle of the Great Depression. In 1953, the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Company merged into a competitor, and production of corn cob pipes at the factory ended. Today, the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Factory remains the only extant building associated with the company, and demonstrates its association through its retention of historic material integrity.

The Early Corn Cob Pipe Industry

Events that occurred in Enschede, Holland in 1862 precipitated the origination of the corncob pipe industry in the United States. Enschede is near the German border and in the 1800s its principle industry was spinning and weaving. In May of 1862, a large fire consumed the town, including the spinning wheel factory owned by Henry Tibbe.[2] Tibbe, along with his wife and son, moved the United States, arriving in New York in January of 1866.[3] He settled in Missouri, where he had two brothers, Fritz and Willem, ending up in Washington, Missouri in 1869. There, Tibbe set up a wood working shop producing spinning wheels, handles and furniture.[4]

According to legend, a local farmer, John Schnarnke, came into Tibbe's shop one day and asked him to use his lathe to bore a hole in a corn cob and smooth the exterior, so that he could use it as a pipe without having to make the cavity by hand with a pocket knife. Henry Tibbe produced additional corn cob pipes using his foot-powered lathe and sold them in his shop. He found that there was a demand for the product.[5] A St. Charles, Missouri man, Wilson "Doc" Carr, in the mid nineteenth century, had been the first to manufacture corn cob pipes as a commodity, using all hand-crafted methods.[6]

[2] "Symbol of the Simple Life – The Corn Cob Pipe," *Tobacco* (January 1970), p. 59.
[3] Family history compiled by Antonia Tibbe, in the Missouri Meerschaum files at the Washington Historical Society, Washington, Missouri.
[4] "Tibbe's Triumph," *American Heritage* (October/November 1980), copy in Missouri Meerschaum archive at Washington Historical Society, Washington, Missouri.
[5] "Streamlining Corncobs: Corn Cob Pipes are as Missourian as Tobacco is American," *Missouriana* (March 1939), p. 12.
[6] "The "Daddy" of the Corn Cob Pipe Industry of Missouri," *St. Louis Post Dispatch* (September 21, 1902), p. 60.

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By 1872, Henry Tibbe was exclusively making corn-cob pipes and established H. Tibbe & Son, the company that was the foundation of the US mechanized corn cob pipe industry.[7] Tibbe experimented with the manufacturing procedure in order to develop a better pipe. One issue corn cob pipes had were that they had a limited lifespan because the process of smoking them caused them to burn through. Tibbe consulted with the local apothecary, Lugwig Muench, to find a material that would fill the interstices of the cob and render the pipe impermeable to destructive power of the fire within the pipe bowl itself. Muench suggested a plaster of Paris like substance that could be used to coat exterior of the cob.[8] Tibbe also added a wood plug that fit snuggly into the bottom of the pipe to offer a firm substrate to attach the pipe stem. In May of 1878, Tibbe applied for a patent for his process of corn cob pipe manufacture utilizing a "plastic self-hardening cement" allowing the pipe to be smoothed on the exterior and to be more durable, and a method of fastening the pipe stem to the bowl utilizing a wooden disc. He was granted the patent in July of 1878 and assigned to both Henry Tibbe and his son Anton Tibbe.[9]

H. Tibbe & Son moved to a former foundry on Front Street in Washington, Missouri in 1878 and purchased a steam engine to power the lathes used to shape the cob pipes. Although this company is not related to the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Factory, it is a significant predecessor. In 1879, George H. Kahmann, Upton L. Meirick, and Guy F. Kahmann became stock holders in the company with Henry Tibbe and his son Anton A. Tibbe, changing the company name to H. Tibbe & Co. [10] In January of 1883, Henry Tibbe registered the trademark "Missouri Meerschaum" with the U. S. Patent Office. The name Meerschaum was chosen because of its allusion to the highly decorated carved pipes made from Meerschaum, a fine white clay-like mineral found in Asia Minor.[11] Due to the increased demand for the product, H. Tibbe & Co., decided to build a new factory at the corner of Front and Cedar streets in Washington. They hired Theodore Link of St. Louis to design the building. He created a building with a multitude of windows so each lathe operator could set-up in front of one allowing sufficient light during working hours, which were typically sun-up to sundown.[12] In 1887, the company was officially incorporated in the State of Missouri, adopting the name Missouri Meerschaum Company. The new company officials included U.L. Weirich as president, Anton A. Tibbe as vice president, Guy F. Kahmann as secretary and treasurer and George H. Pike as superintendent.[13] In 1898 the company produced over 6 million corn cob pipes, showing the quick rise in popularity of the pipe style.[14]

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[7] "Corn Cob Pipes Not Invented Here, but This is the Industry's Birthplace," undated copy of newspaper article in the Missouri Meerschaum archive at the Washington Historical Society, Washington, Missouri.
[8] "Corn Cob Pipe Manufacturers," *Celebrating 175 Years, Washington, MO, 1839-2014* (Washington, Missouri: Washington Historical Society, 2013), p. 30. "Symbol of the Simple Life – The Corn Cob Pipe," *Tobacco* (January 1970), p. 60.
[9] United States Patent Office, Patent #205,816
[10] "Symbol of the Simple Life – The Corn Cob Pipe," *Tobacco* (January 1970), p. 60.
[11] Quirk, Paula McNeill, "The Missouri Meerschaum Pipe," *Missouri Historical Review* 78 (October 1983,) p. 16.
[12] Tibbe, Madeline, "Keeping the Record Straight," p. 4, undated manuscript in the Missouri Meerschaum archive at Washington Historical Society, Washington, Missouri.
[13] Gregory, Ralph, *A History of Washington, MO*, Washington Preservation Inc. and Washington Historical Society, Washington, Missouri, p. 26-7.
[14] Copy of an undated page from *The St. Louis Manufacturer* in the Missouri Meerschaum archive at the Washington Historical Society, Washington, Missouri.

Process of Cob Pipe Manufacture and Size of Industry

When the industry was young, there were numerous declarations of astonishment that there were actually companies that wanted corn cobs. But just any cob would not do. To be made into a pipe, the corn cob needed to be 1 ¾ inch in diameter and very hard, and typically required a 140-day growing season. The cobs could be either red or white but the kernels needed to be white to ensure that the cob would be hard enough for use. The soil and climate of the Missouri River valley in central Missouri were ideal for growing this type of corn.[15] Cob pipe corn was "native" to Missouri in the area around Washington and was sometimes called Collier corn after the man who developed it. This corn was open pollinated and was used by most manufacturers through the mid-twentieth century. By mid-century, hybrid corn was being introduced and was inadequate for pipe production. Most pipe factories were contracting with farmers to grow corn throughout the twentieth century. In 1947, M.S. Zuber with U.S. Department of Agriculture began a program at the University of Missouri to develop a corn hybrid suited to the corn cob pipe industry.[16]

Factories kept several million cobs on hand that were dried up to two years prior to their being turned into pipes. Once of sufficient dryness the cobs were cut to length, sorted and taken to the appropriate boring machine where the centers were drilled out by hand using a powered lathe, then the filling material was applied to seal the interstices of the cob. After that, they were dried for a couple of days, then sanded smooth and varnished. Then the stem holes were bored, stems placed and labels affixed. Once complete, they were packaged and shipped.[17]

Production numbers show that Missouri was the center of the corn cob pipe industry by the start of the twentieth century, due to the availability of the raw materials needed. The number of corn cob pipes produced in Missouri for 1904 was 25 million, worth $417,881. The 1908 worth of output for the counties where cob pipe factories were located totaled $418,816, with Franklin County's four factories producing a total worth of $401,643, Gasconade County $23,621, and Warren County $913. Franklin County, again with four factories, produced 23,268,156 corn cob pipes, Gasconade 1,384,416, and Warren 18,888. This translates to 14 million corn cobs.[18] The 1912 output of corn cob pipes in Missouri was worth $519,970, translating to a total number of pipes equal to 28,171,872. These were produced by six factories, three in Franklin County, one in Boonville (the nominated factory), one in Union and one in Owensville.[19] The 1919 figures for corn cob pipe production reported that the 6 factories in Missouri produced 27,591,840 corn cob

[15] "Farming for Corn Cob Pipes," *Everybody's Magazine*, 55.4 (October 1926), p. 38.
[16] "Specialty Corn," *Corn: Origin, History, Technology and Production*, C. Wayne Smith, Javier Betran, E.A.C. Runge, eds. (Hoboken, N.J.: John C, Wiley, 2004), p. 917.
[17] Carl Avery Werner, "The Calabash, Corncob and Clay," *Tobaccoland* (New York: The Tobacco Leaf Publishing Company, 1922), pp. 300-302.
[18] Missouri Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Surplus Products of Missouri Counties for the Year Ending December 3, 1908, supplement to Annual Report issued by the Bureau of Labor Statistics* (Jefferson City, Missouri: The Hugh Stephens Printing Company, 1909), p. 46, 48, 109.
[19] Missouri Bureau of Labor Statistics, *Annual Report 1912/1913* (Jefferson City, Missouri: Hugh Stephens Printing Company, 1914), p. 129.

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pipes, employed 425 individuals, consisting of 315 men and boys and 110 women and girls, earning a total of $260,674.[20]

Corn Cob Pipe Industry Expansion, 1895-1905

Upon the expiration of Tibbe's patent at the end of the nineteenth century, numerous corn cob pipe manufacturers began making pipes in midwestern states. These were often small operations, and little is known about most of them. Prior to 1895, references can be found to 6 other factories. Two located in southeast Kansas, at Elk Falls[21] and Sedan,[22] one located in southeast Nebraska, at Greenwood,[23] and three located in Missouri, at Potosi,[24] Rich Hill,[25] and St. Louis.[26] The factory with the most attention given was in Sedan, KS. In March of 1890, the Sedan factory was manufacturing a new style of pipe, employed 22,[27] and was receiving cobs from western Kansas.[28] In January of 1892, the St. Joseph Herald stated that there were only three cob pipe factories operating in the United States, one each in Nebraska and Kansas, and one at St. Louis. Together these factories produced 10,000 cob pipes per day.[29] It is unclear whether these factories utilized different methods than H. Tibbe & Co., as Tibbe usually sued those companies that were manufacturing a similar product. It is also unclear whether the St. Louis company referred to may, in fact, be Tibbe & Co., as their products were exclusively handled by Hirschl & Bendheim, a tobacco products wholesaler located at 419 N. 4rd in St. Louis.[30]

After 1895, the number of cob pipe manufacturers rose dramatically, including across Illinois. In 1895, factories at Bement (13 men employed with a capacity of 5000 pipes per day),[31] Forrest (5 men and 5 boys to operate the machines with a capacity of 5000-6000 pipes per day),[32] Varna (12 men employed),[33] and Roodhouse (5 men and 3 boys employed with a capacity of 6000 pipes per day) began operations.[34] Kansas and Missouri followed suit with factories at Lyons, Ottawa, and Quenemo, Kansas, and Charleston, Marthasville, Shelbina, La Grange, and Mokane, Missouri opening in the next few years.[35] The factory at Quenemo closed in 1898,

[20] "Missouri Meerschaums," *Tobacco*, 69.9 (January 1, 1920), p. 4.
[21] "Corn Cobs," *Douglass Tribune*, Douglass, KS (January 3, 1890), p. 4.
[22] *The Sedan Graphic*, Sedan, KS (February 12, 1890), p. 3.
[23] *The St. Joseph Herald*, St. Joseph, MO (January 10, 1892), p. 4.
[24] "Southeasterings," *Ironton County Register*, Ironton, MO (March 22, 1883), p. 1.
[25] *The Daily* Advocate, Clinton, MO (August 31, 1886), p. 2.
[26] *The St. Joseph Herald*, St. Joseph, MO (January 10, 1892), p. 4.
[27] *The Cedar Vale Star*, Cedar Vale, KS (March 28, 1890), p.2.
[28] *The Weekly Times-Star*, Sedan, KS (March 7, 1890), p.3.
[29] *The St. Joseph Herald*, St. Joseph, MO (January 10, 1892), p. 4.
[30] *Gould's St. Louis Directory*, p. 716.
[31] *The Decatur Herald*, Decatur, IL (August 16, 1895), p. 2.
[32] "Cob Pipe Factory," *El Paso Times*, El Paso, IL (July 26, 1895), p. 8.
[33] *The Paxton Record*, Paxton, IL (October 3, 1895), p. 1.
[34] *The Paxton Record,* Paxton, IL (May 9, 1895), p. 1.
[35] "A Good Thing," *The Lyons Republican*, Lyons, KS (July 3, 1896), p. 4; *Salina Daily Republican-Journal*, Salina, KS (February 17, 1896), p. 2; *Quenemo Republican*, Quenemo, KS (January 9, 1896), p. 3; "Wealth in Corn Cobs," *Darlington Record* (Darlington, MO) September 9, 1897, p. 3.; *Marthasville News*, Marthasville, MO (August 12, 1897), p. 1; *Shelby County Herald*, Shelbyville, MO (June 9, 1897), p. 4. *Shelby County Herald*, Shelbyville, MO (March 11, 1896), p. 1; *Henry County Democrat*, Clinton, MO (January 12, 1905), p. 5.

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citing lack of business and a rise in the price of cobs due to the Dingley Tarriff Act.[36] Illinois added another at Mason City in 1897 that produced between 4000 and 5000 pipes per day,[37] and one opened at St. Anne, IL prior to 1898.[38] The Great Central Manufacturing Co. was organized in Mattoon, Ill in 1898 by Frank Kern, James Kitchin and F.N. Henley to manufacture "Illinois Meerschaums." The company employed 20 machines and produced 46 different types of pipes and had set up shop in Mr. Kitchin's Elevator.[39]

There were undoubtedly additional small factories, and newspaper editorials across the Midwest encouraged the establishment of corn cob pipe factories as a way to improve the economy of small farming communities. It was declared in newspapers across the country in 1899 that many would-be cob pipe factory owners had been defrauded by a group of men operating out of Washington, Missouri, who solicited the mayors of small towns with the promise of enormous profits from these factories and the offer of a good deal on the machinery need to start a factory. The machinery was then sold at an inflated price, and the factory rarely succeeded because the corn cob pipe market was already saturated.[40] The prospective operators were contacted by mail under the letterhead of the Miller Brothers and were promised substantial profits and a man to superintend the factory for the first 6 months for a percentage of the profits. The scheme operated across the country, but the majority of the letters were sent to prospective buyers in Missouri, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, South Carolina and Louisiana.[41] While regrettable, the incident showed the national scope of the cob pipe industry.

The 1900 edition of the *Thomas Grocery Trades Reference Book* listed eighteen corn cob pipe manufacturers in the United States, along with the amount of capital that each employed in the operation of their factories. The American Cob Pipe Co. of Washington, Missouri, Degen-Breckenkamp of Washington, Missouri, Hirschl & Bendheim of Washington, Missouri, and H. Tibbe & Son Manufacturing Co. of Washington, Missouri reported the highest capitalization.[42] By 1905, the number of manufacturers in neighboring states had decreased but the number in Missouri increased.[43] By 1910, all corn cob pipe manufacturers listed by the *Thomas Register of American Manufacturers* included only Missouri companies, and all were located in Franklin or Gasconade Counties. Corn cob pipe manufacturers now numbered five, Union Pipe Co. of Owensville, Missouri, Degen-Breckenkamp Manufacturing Co., Hirschl & Bendheim, Missouri Meerschaum (formerly H. Tibbe & Son), and the Phoenix American Pipe Works, all of Washington, Missouri.[44] Phoenix American reported $50,000 in capital in 1910.[45]

Phoenix and American Pipe Works

[36] *Osborne County Farmer*, Osborne, KS (January 20, 1898), p. 4; *The Springfield News-Leader*, Springfield, MO (February 10, 1898), p. 4.
[37] *Decatur Daily Republican*, Decatur, IL (May 28, 1897), p. 6.
[38] *Gibson City Courier*, Gibson City, IL (March 25, 1898), p. 1.
[39] "Cob Pipes," *Mattoon Gazette*, Mattoon, IL (June 24, 1898), p. 1.
[40] "Four Men Found Guilty," *St. Joseph Gazette Herald*, St. Joseph, MO (November 16, 1899), p. 1.
[41] "Accused of "Corn Cob" Fraud," *Chicago Tribune* (January 7, 1899), p. 9.
[42] "Pipe," *Thomas Grocery Trades Reference Book 1900 Edition* (New York: Thomas Publishing Company, 1900), pp. 308-9.
[43] "Pipes," *Thomas Register of American Manufacturers: The Buyer's Guide 1905-1906*, (New York: Thomas Publishing Company, 1906), pp. 766-7.
[44] "Pipes," *Thomas Register of American Manufacturers* (New York: Thomas Publishing Company, 1910), p. 1759.
[45] Ibid.

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The American Pipe Company began in 1893 as a partnership between J.L. Bryan and J.L. Calvin, both of Washington, Missouri. In 1894, the company moved to an old hotel located at Main and Jefferson in Washington (no longer extant), transforming it into one of the larger manufacturing facilities for corn cob pipes in the city. At the time they were producing 100 gross pipes per day, that all found ready sale.[46] Little could be found about John L. Bryan, other than he was involved with several cob pipe manufacturers, and may have worked at the Tibbe factory for several years learning the trade. John L. Calvin was born in Union, MO in 1865, but spent most of his life in Washington. Calvin signed with the St. Louis Browns in 1890, but was let go after missing too many practices.[47] He was a county judge from 1925 until 1927 and was involved in the Democratic party, as was his son George B. Calvin, who received letters of condolence from both Truman and Roosevelt upon his father's death.[48] John Calvin built the Calvin Theater in Washington in the 1910s and was the first to bring motion pictures to the city. He founded a bus line, the Washington Union Bus Co., that offered service to St. Louis.[49] When he was elected vice-president of the Phoenix American Pipe Co. in 1926, the paper announced that he had eight jobs.[50]

In January of 1901, J.L. Calvin sold the building at Main and Jefferson to the Phoenix American Pipe Works, a corporation that had been founded by Charles Oscar Strutz.[51] Calvin became a co-owner of the company at the same time. Strutz was born in Dresden, Germany in 1846 and came to the United States at age 18. He fought in the Civil War under General Custer. Strutz began making pipes in Chicago in 1893 and came to Washington in 1900.[52] After operating in Washington, Missouri for 10 more years, the company sought another location to build a new factory. Calvin sold his interest in the company to Strutz on January 1, 1909.[53] Both Boonville and North Kansas City sought to have the new factory relocate to their town.[54]

In February 1911, Strutz announced that the company would move to Boonville, Missouri, as the residents of that town had banded together to come up with enough money to fulfill the necessary $25,000 subscription needed to convince the owners of the Phoenix American to move to their city. The next task was to find a site for the three-story brick building.[55] Prior to this vote, Strutz was seen talking to the local farmers trying to convince them to plant the type

[46] Copy of page from unknown book in the Phoenix American archive file at the Washington Historical Society, *Die Washingtoner Post* (August, 10, 1894).
[47] *Union Record* (April 11, 1890), p. 1.
[48] "John L. Calvin Died Wednesday at the Hospital," *Washington Citizen*, Washington, MO (November 17, 1944) p. 1; Letter from Harry S. Truman, U.S.S. to George B. Calvin dated November 17, 1944 and Telegram from Franklin D. Roosevelt to George B. Calvin dated November 17, 1944, Phoenix American archive at the Washington Historical Society, Washington, MO.
[49] "John L. Calvin Died Wednesday at the Hospital," *Washington Citizen*, Washington, MO (November 17, 1944), p. 1.
[50] *Washington Citizen*, Washington, MO (February 19, 1926), p. 8.
[51] Warranty Deed dated January 5, 1901 in the Phoenix American archive at the Washington Historical Society, Washington, MO.
[52] "C.O. Strutz Dead," *Washington Citizen*, Washington, MO (August 6, 1926), p. 8.
[53] *Washington Citizen*, Washington, MO (January 7, 1949), p. 3.
[54] Melton, E. J., "Boonville Leads the World in the Cob Pipes," *Melton's History of Cooper County Missouri* (Columbia, Missouri: Press of the E.W. Stephens Publishing Company, 1937), p. 347.
[55] "Boonville Gets a Cob Pipe Factory," *Fair Play,* Sainte Genevieve, Missouri, p. 1.

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of corn that the new factory needed to use in the manufacture of pipes, indicating that they could get an additional $10 per acre for the cobs.[56] On February 18, 1911, the stockholders met and agreed to change the location of operations of the Phoenix American company to Boonville.[57]

Information about the new factory building comes through several newspaper and journal reports, as plans have not been located. The designer and builder of the plant remain unknown. However, the design of the facility is firmly within the convention of the mill method factory type that was prevalent between 1890-1920. The plain reinforced concrete slab, lack of basement and plan red brick walls are all in the utilitarian tradition of this factory construction, as is the exposed internal structure where bearing members are also fire-rated timber. Although Boonville has only one other major mill method factory, the Hamilton-Brown Shoe Company Building (built 1919-20; NR 3/16/1990) on First Street, this type of factory is common in Missouri and the United States.[58]

When completed in 1912, the factory had 38,000 square feet of floor space and warehouse space to store the equivalent of 151 carloads of corncobs, and was the largest corn cob pipe factory in Missouri by square footage. This likely made the factory largest in the nation as well. The families of 69 workers moved from Washington to Boonville to keep their jobs and provide experienced help to get the factory going.[59] The company also began hiring workers from Boonville at this time. In 1915, it was reported that the factory produced 50,000 pipes per day.[60] The Phoenix American Cob Pipe Company grew to an output of $750,000 by 1926, and sold its wares across the country.

Boonville would have been alluring to the company due to improvements in railroad access. The first railroad to reach Boonville was the Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad, which arrived in 1873 on a line linked to both Tebo and Neosho, Missouri.[61] That railroad, however, did not build a passenger depot – the city's first – until 1912.[62] The first railroad that linked Boonville to markets in St. Louis was the Boonville, St. Louis and Southern Railway, incorporated in January 1878 and built by 1880. Upon completion, the new railway leased itself to the Missouri Pacific Railroad for 30 years, then in 1910 for 99 years, and renegotiated again in 1917 to extend until 1955.[63] The Missouri Pacific Railroad lease in 1910 provided security to industrial companies that Boonville would have a long-term connection to larger markets, because it provided a link not only to St. Louis, whose hinterland reached to the southwest and southeast, but to Kansas City, whose hinterland extended across the Great Plains and the west.

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[56] "Pipe Corn," *Henry County Democrat*, Clinton, Missouri (January 5, 1911), p. 2.
[57] Affidavit dated July 16, 1913, Phoenix American archive at the Washington Historical Society, Washington, Missouri.
[58] See Preservation Planning Section, Missouri Historic Preservation Program, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: Hamilton Brown Shoe Factory* (1989).
[59] Melton, p. 347.
[60] *The Shelbina Torchlight*, Shelbina, MO (March 26, 1915), p. 6.
[61] Preservation Planning Section, Missouri Historic Preservation Program, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: Missouri, Kansas and Texas Railroad Depot* (1989), p. 8-1.
[62] Ibid.
[63] *Poor's Manual of Railroads* vol. 56 (1923), p. 973.

The Phoenix American Cob Pipe Company introduced the first bone stem pipe, the "Dewey," in 1915, which proved to be very popular. In 1935, the company introduced the "Mel-O-Cob" and the "Ima-Cob," both had the appearance and performance of the more expensive briar pipe but were much more affordable. These pipes featured a thicker exterior molding compound, later known as bakelite, to give a smoother appearance.[64] When the "Mel-O-Cob" was introduced the factory was operated 120 hours a week to keep up with demand.[65] The Mel-O-Cob concealed the cob with an outer painted meerschaum clay layer, so that it looked more like clay and wooden pipes more fashionable in urban areas. Sales were outstanding, with round-the clock production reported in 1937.[66] In 1934, prior to the launch, the Phoenix American Cob Pipe company successfully recruited the inventor of the bakelite cob pipe, Edwin J. Steutermann, to relocate to Boonville to work for the company.[67] The company officers had interviewed Steutermann about the process previously.

E.J. Melton's *Melton's History of Cooper County, Missouri* (1937) reported that the chief industries of Boonville at the time of writing were the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Company factory, a shoe factory employing 600 people (first operated by Hamilton-Brown Shoe Company of St. Louis, then merged into International Shoe Company), a chick hatchery shipping to every state, a flour mill, a sand company, two ice-cream factories, a soda water bottling plant, a monument manufacturing factory, a harness manufactory, two machine shops, a lumber mill and numerous smaller manufacturing shops.[68] Melton claimed that the Phoenix American factory was the largest of its kind in the world.

As the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Factory thrived, Cooper County, Missouri changed as a result of the Great Depression. In 1930, the county recorded 19,308 people in the Census, compared to 18,075 in 1940 and 16,608 in 1950. The predominant occupation of county residents was in farm work, and in the Great Depression farms failed and county residents relocated to cities for industrial employment. A 1936 drought, following the nationally-devasting 1934 drought and a 1935 rainy year, proved to be a major factor in relocation within Missouri.[69] Topsoil loss was a major problem in Cooper County.[70] As a local industrial employer, the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Factory benefitted from a larger supply of ready laborers, but also had been benefitting from an ample supply of corn cobs produced by local farmers whose cobs could be transported affordably to the factory. In 1945, the Cooper County Extension introduced a "balanced farming" program to discourage farmers relying on single crops such as corn, and this program ultimately may have affected the costs of making cob pipes in Boonville.[71]

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[64] "Corn Cob Pipe Factory," *Memorabilia of Cooper County*, Mary Weimholt, ed. (Boonville, Missouri: Curtis Media Corporation, 1990), p. B29.
[65] Melton, p. 345.
[66] Ibid.
[67] "Edwin J. Steutermann," *The Washington Citizen* (February 14, 1947), p. 9.
[68] Ibid.
[69] Bernhard Ostrolenk, "Missouri Farms Hurt by Drought," *New York Times* (July 26, 1936), p. 10.
[70] *Cooper County Extension 100 Year Celebration, 1913-2013: Past - Present – Future*. <http://extension.missouri.edu/cooper/documents/ec_council/anniversary/cooper_county_extension.pdf>. Accessed 23 June 2019.
[71] *Cooper County Extension 100 Year Celebration, 1913-2013: Past - Present – Future.*

By the late 1930s, the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Company had played a major role in industrializing Boonville. Boonville's efforts to lure the Phoenix American company in 1912 and the Hamilton Brown Shoe Company in 1920 boosted the local workforce, and population growth followed. Boonville's population rose from 4,252 in 1910 to 4,665 in 1920 and 6,435 in 1930. The Hamilton Brown Shoe company surpassed the Phoenix American Company as Boonville's largest employer in 1927, but both remained significant pillars of the local economy.[72]

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Missouri's Phoenix American, Missouri Meerschaum or Hirschl & Bendheim companies continued to rival each other in product innovation, output and distributin. Most sources on production carry local biases, with Washington claiming its makers as the largest, and Boonville claiming Phoenix American. A more level examination of the prowess of these three corn cob pipe manufacturers can be found in an issue of *BusinessWeek* in 1944, which plainly stated that "The Missouri Meerschaum Compan, the Hirschl & Bendheim Company of Washington, Mo. and the Phoenix American Pipe Company, Boonville, Mo., produce virtually all of the world's supply of corncob pipes."[73]

C.O. Strutz died in August of 1926.[74] Earlier that year, at a stockholders' meeting in February, F.M. Strutz, one of C.O. Strutz's sons, was elected president and J.L. Calvin was elected vice-president.[75] In 1929, F.M. Strutz was president and Leo Strutz was the Secretary-treasurer.[76] The 1937 executive board consisted of F.M. Strutz, president, L.B. Schmidt, treasurer, and Carl Gurbich, Secretary.[77]

The End of the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Company

In 1953, the Missouri Meerschaum Company of Washington purchased the machinery, material stock and trademarks of the Phoenix American Pipe Works. At that time, Reginald M. Strutz, C.O. Strutz's grandson was the president of the company. At the peak of its production in the 1920s, the factory employed 170, but by the early 1950s only 50 or so were employed.[78] The declension in workforce partially was due to increased automation of the production line, not necessarily lack of productivity. However, this was the era of peak popularity of corn cob pipes, and the era would end. The factory building itself was purchased by McGraw Electric in 1954 to be used as regional executive offices and an experimental lab.[79] McGraw-Edison Company, the renamed McGraw Electric, occupied the building through the 1980s, when the company sold the building to Toastmaster Corporation.

In 1968, the McGraw-Edison Company remodeled the building's first floor. The office area was gutted and rebuilt with then-contemporary finishes like wall paneling, suspended acoustic tile ceilings and wall-to-wall carpeting. The office area was extended into the first floor

[72] Preservation Planning Section, Missouri Historic Preservation Program, *National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form: Hamilton Brown Shoe Factory* (1989), p. 8-1.
[73] "Three Big Makers," *BusinessWeek* (July 1, 1944), p. 38.
[74] "C.O. Strutz Dead," *Washington Citizen*, Washington, MO (August 6, 1926), p. 8.
[75] *Washington Citizen*, Washington, MO (February 19, 1926), p. 8.
[76] *The Macon Republican*, Macon, MO (March 19, 1929), p. 4.
[77] Melton, E. J., , p. 347.
[78] "Local Firm Buys Boonville Pipe Factory," *Washington Missourian*, Washington, MO (May 28, 1953), p. 1.
[79] *Moberly Monitor-Index,* Moberly, MO (January 8, 1954), p. 4.

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manufacturing area at the north as well (see photograph 7). Furthermore, the company simultaneously removed the boiler house wing and constructed a large one-story addition wrapping the north and east sides of the building. This addition has concrete masonry walls, steel windows, and a flat roof. Although of a different era and material, it has an industrial appearance like the original building. Inside, the exterior first floor wall of the east elevation is exposed and retains most of its original windows.

While still in use, the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Factory nearly was listed in the National Register. The *Historic Resources of Boonville, Missouri* Multiple Resource Area (1983) included the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Factory Building among a list of 20 individual resources outside of established historic districts that possessed local significance and were nominated to the National Register of Historic Places as part of the MRA. The owner of the building objected to listing, and the final draft of the MRA states that the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Factory is not part of the MRA listing due to that objection, but that the building was determined eligible for National Register listing by the SHPO in 1982.

The Phoenix American Cob Pipe Factory has been vacant for the last several years, although remains in good condition. The setting around the factory has changed as the railroad spurs no longer exist, and part of the railroad track bed to the west is now a recreational trail.

Conclusion

As the only factory purpose-built by, and only remaining building utilized by the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Company, the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Factory has a significant role in the history of one of Missouri's most endemic industrial stories. The period of significance spans the operational years of the factory, beginning with its opening and ending when the building ceased to be used for cob pipe production. The factory itself is testament to the company's ability to navigate the early years of the corn cob pipe industry in Missouri, where many competitors foundered or ended up merged into expanding larger concerns. Phoenix American instead became one of the growing manufacturers in the twentieth century, a position strengthened by moving away from the saturated market of Washington to Boonville, and by the company's continual development of new products. While utilizing the factory, the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Company was one of the state's three major cob pipe producers who produced almost every corn cob pipe sold across the entire world. The factory remains an important part of Missouri's manufacturing heritage.

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Boundary Description

The boundary of this property bounds all of the parcel recorded by Assessor of Cooper County, Missouri as parcel number 05-7.0-35-002-021-002.000. The parcel's legal description is thus: POB, SE COR 2ND & CHESTNUT, NE 205', SE 275', SW 80', SE 80', SW 127.5^', NW 355', POB, (2ND & VINE).

Boundary Justification

This parcel is the entire site used by the Phoenix American Cob Pipe Factory during the period of significance, and the company's only site of operations between 1912 and 1953.

Figure 1: Phoenix American Cob Pipe Factory Boundary Map
Source: Google Maps

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Figure 2: Context map showing location of property in Boonville, Missouri. Source: Google Maps data, 2019.

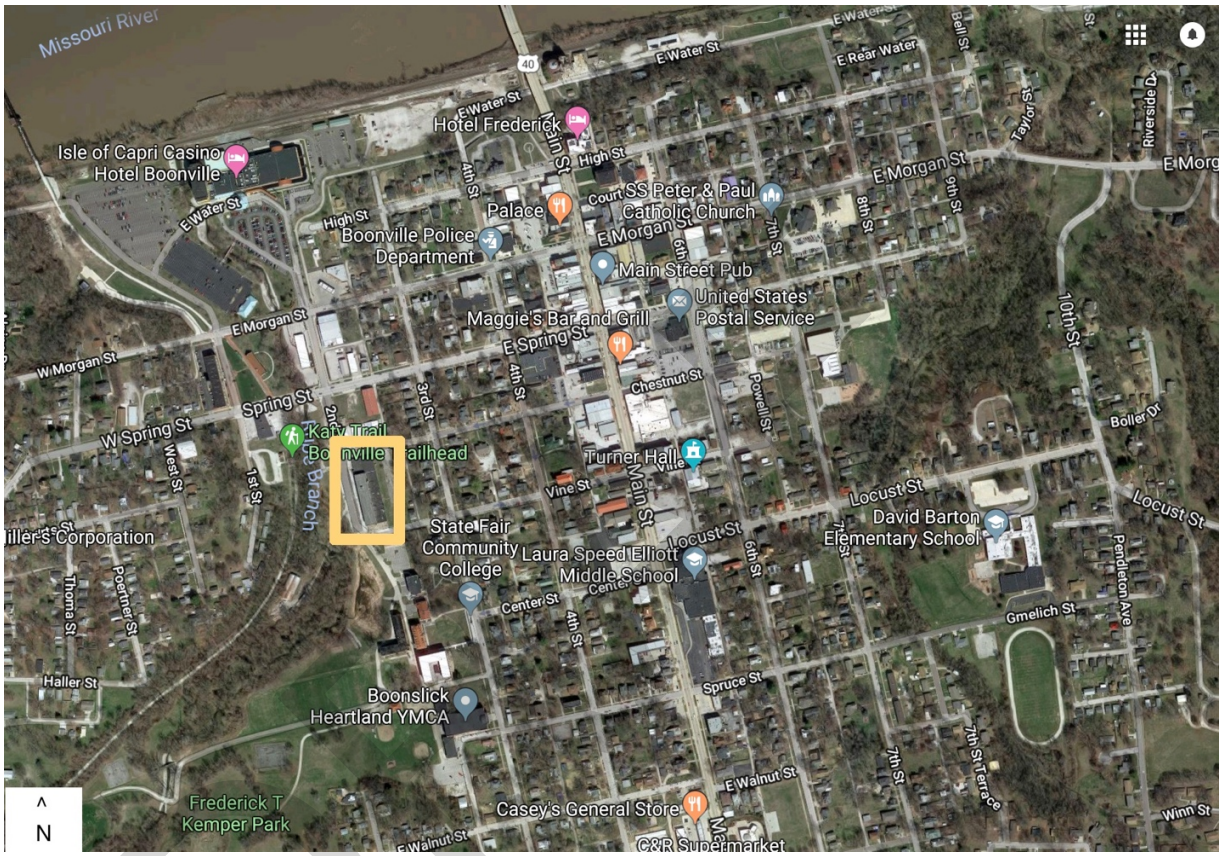

Figure 3: Site plan photographic key. Source: Levine Associates, 2018.

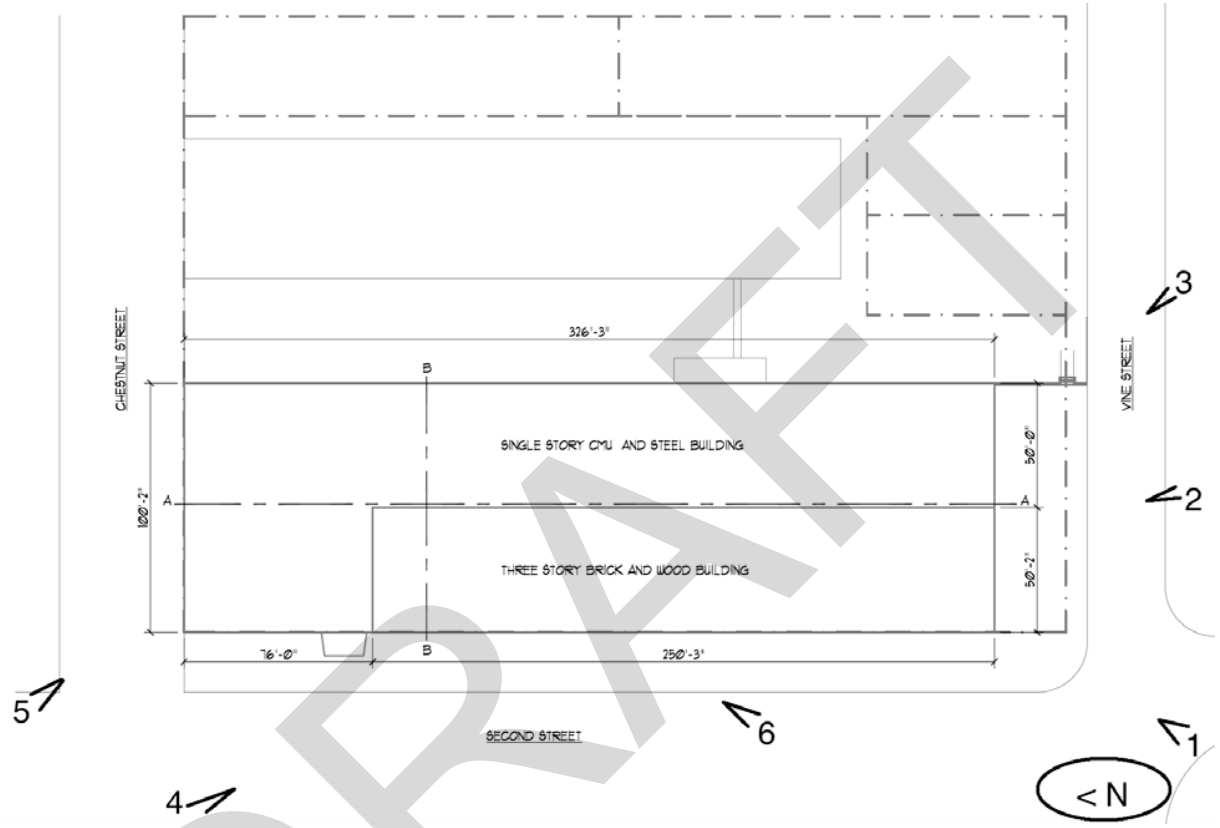

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Figure 4: First floor plan with photographic key. Source: Levine Associates, 2018.

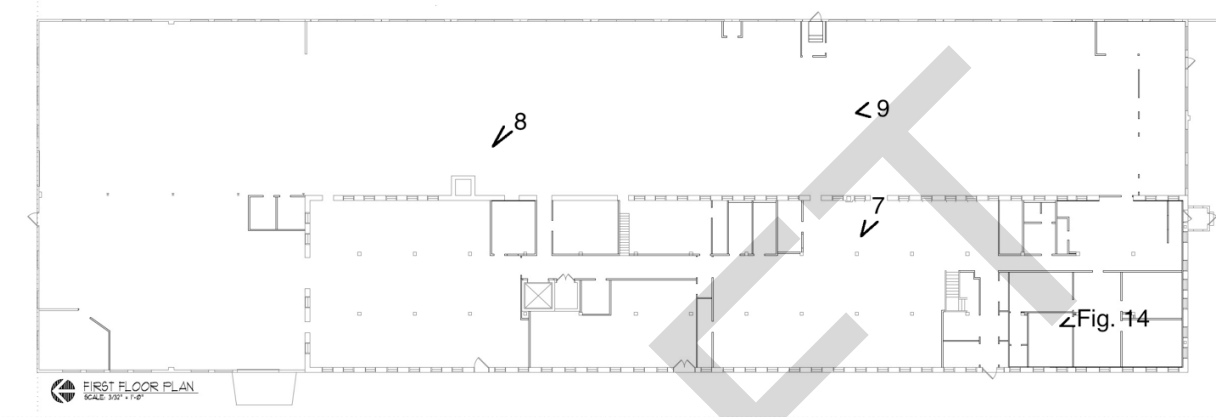

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Figure 5: Second floor plan with photographic key. Source: Levine Associates, 2018.

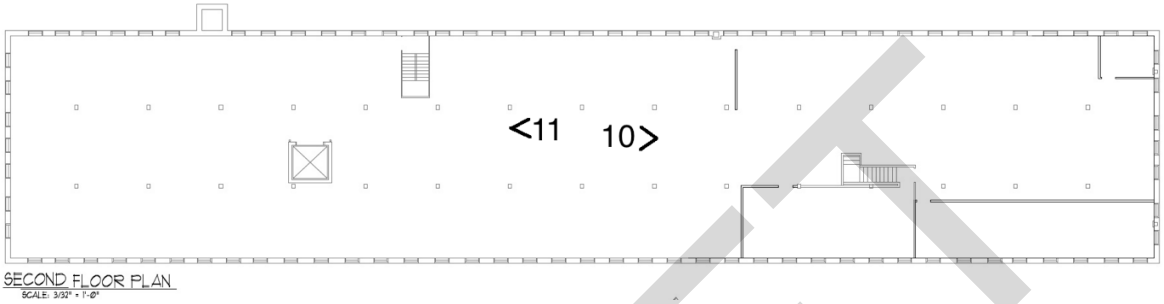

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Figure 6: Third floor plan with photographic key. Source: Levine Associates, 2018.

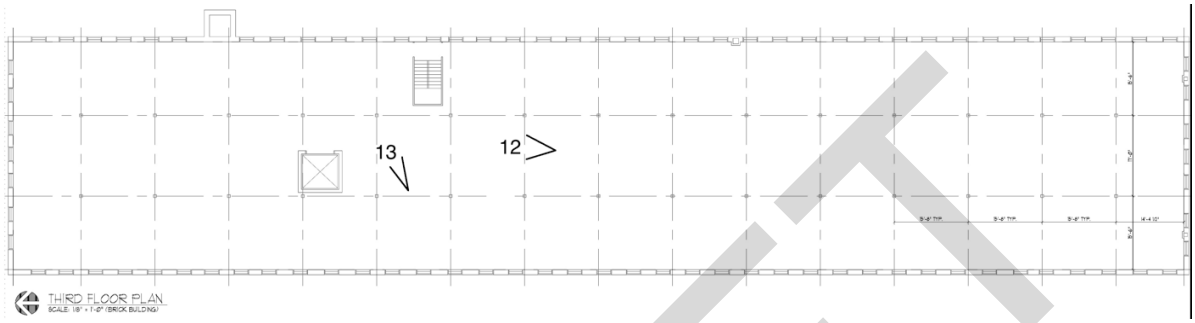

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Figure 7: Elevation drawings. Source: Levine Associates, 2018.

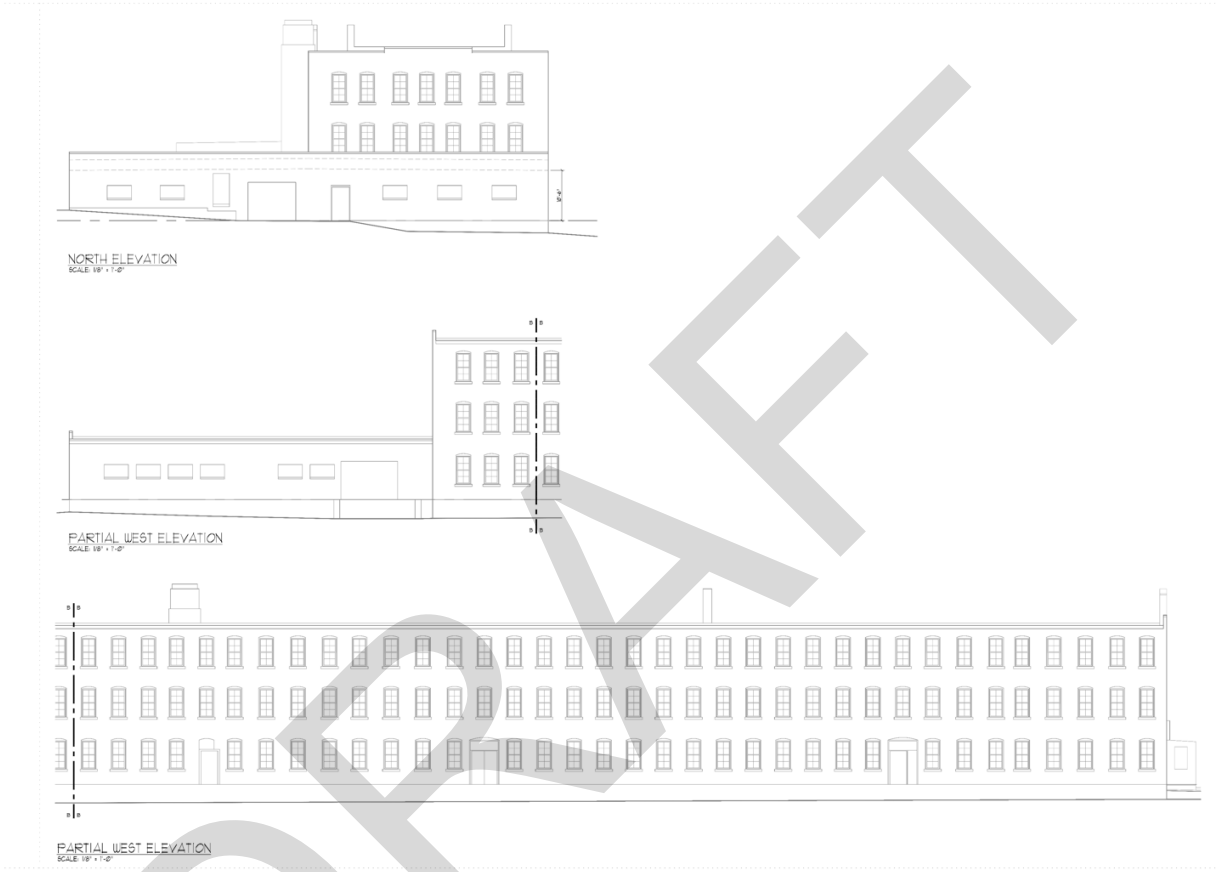

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Figure 8: Elevation drawings. Source: Levine Associates, 2018.

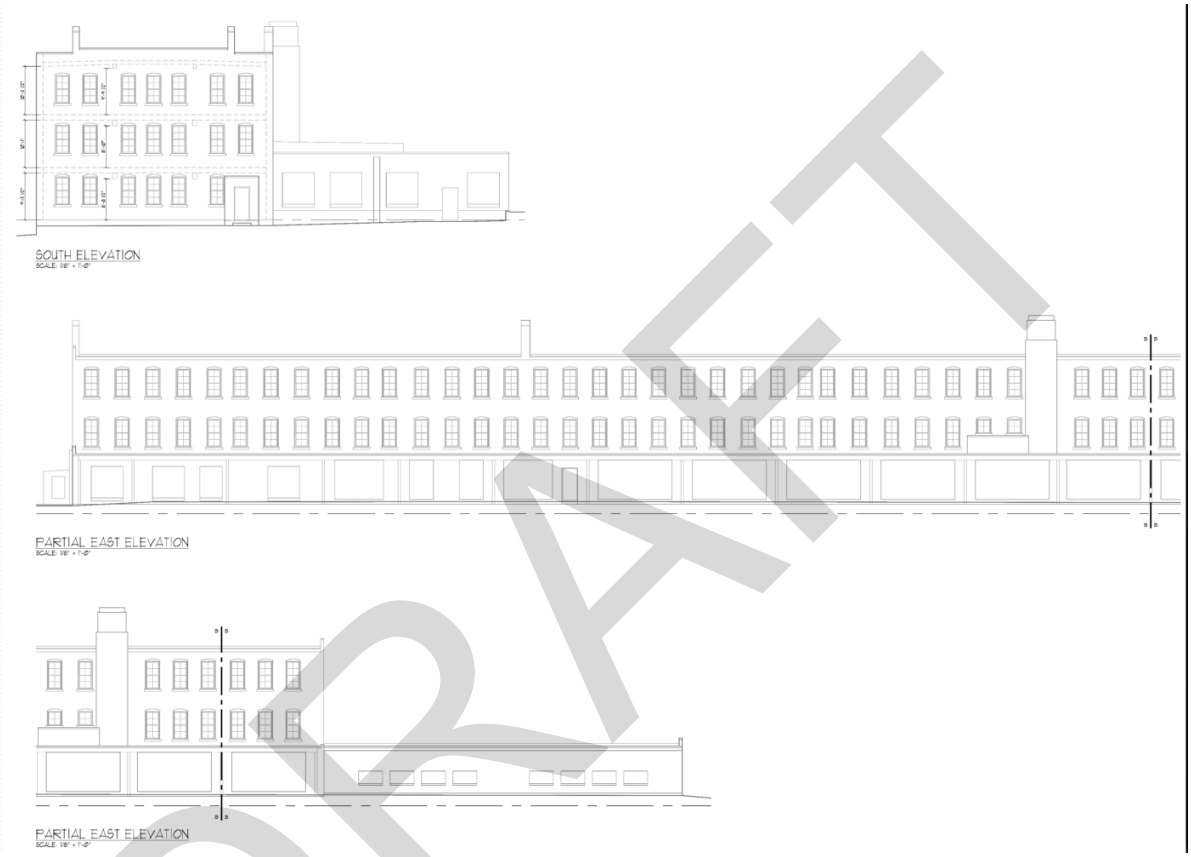

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Figure 9: The Phoenix-American Cob Pipe Factory as it appeared on the 1929 Sanborn fire insurance map. Source: UMI Serials.

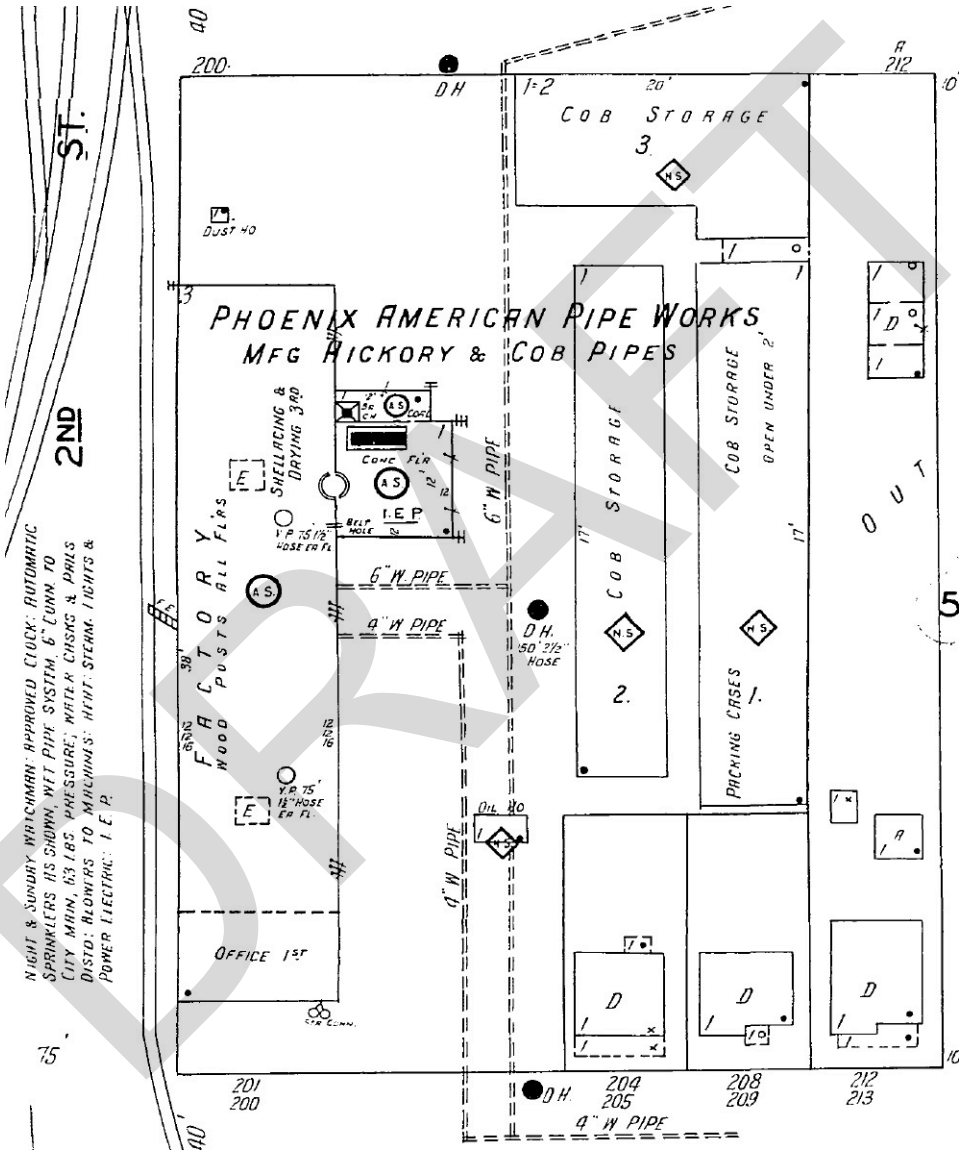

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Figure 10: Postcard view, unknown date. Source: John D. Hopkins Pinterest page, 2019.

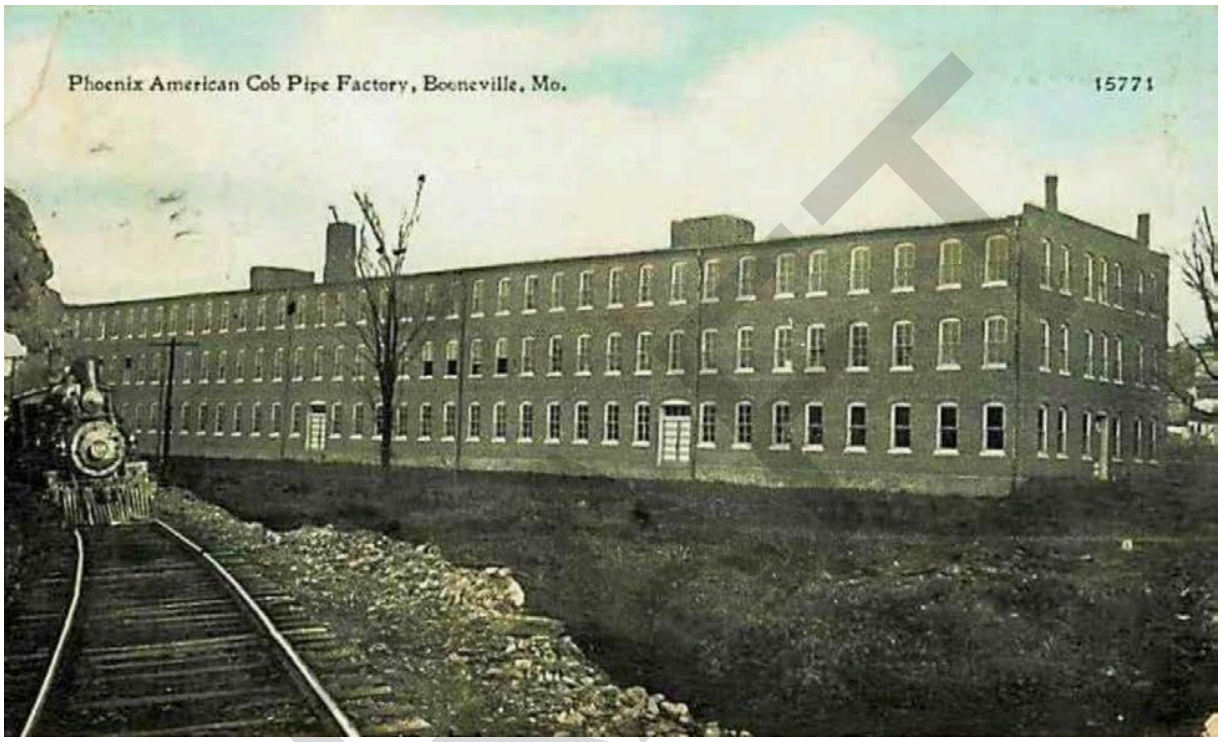

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Figure 11: Postcard view, unknown date. Source: Washington Historical Society; Washington, Missouri.

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Figure 12: Postcard view, unknown date. Source: Washington Historical Society; Washington, Missouri.

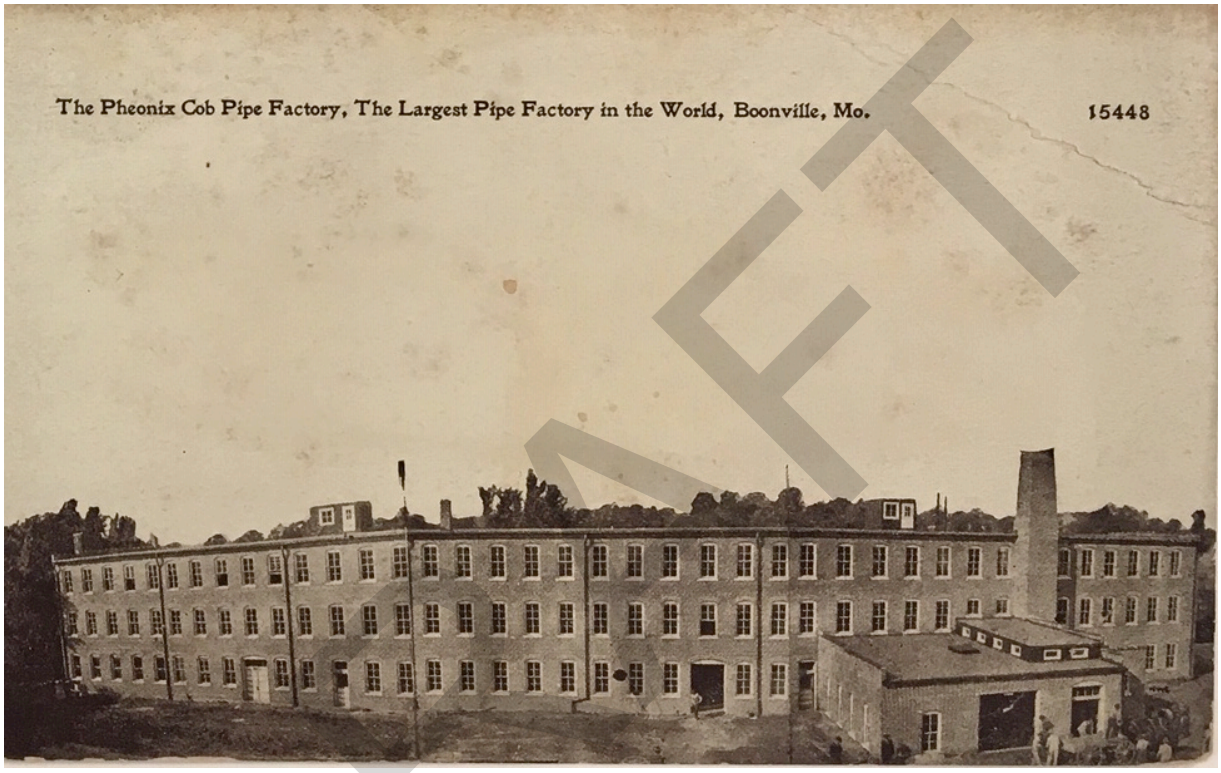

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Figure 13: Laborers working inside of the factory. Source: *Memorabilia of Cooper County*.

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Figure 14: View inside of the first floor office area. Photograph by the preparer, January 2019.

Figure 15: Google Earth Map.

Latitude: 38.582345
Longitude: -92.445175

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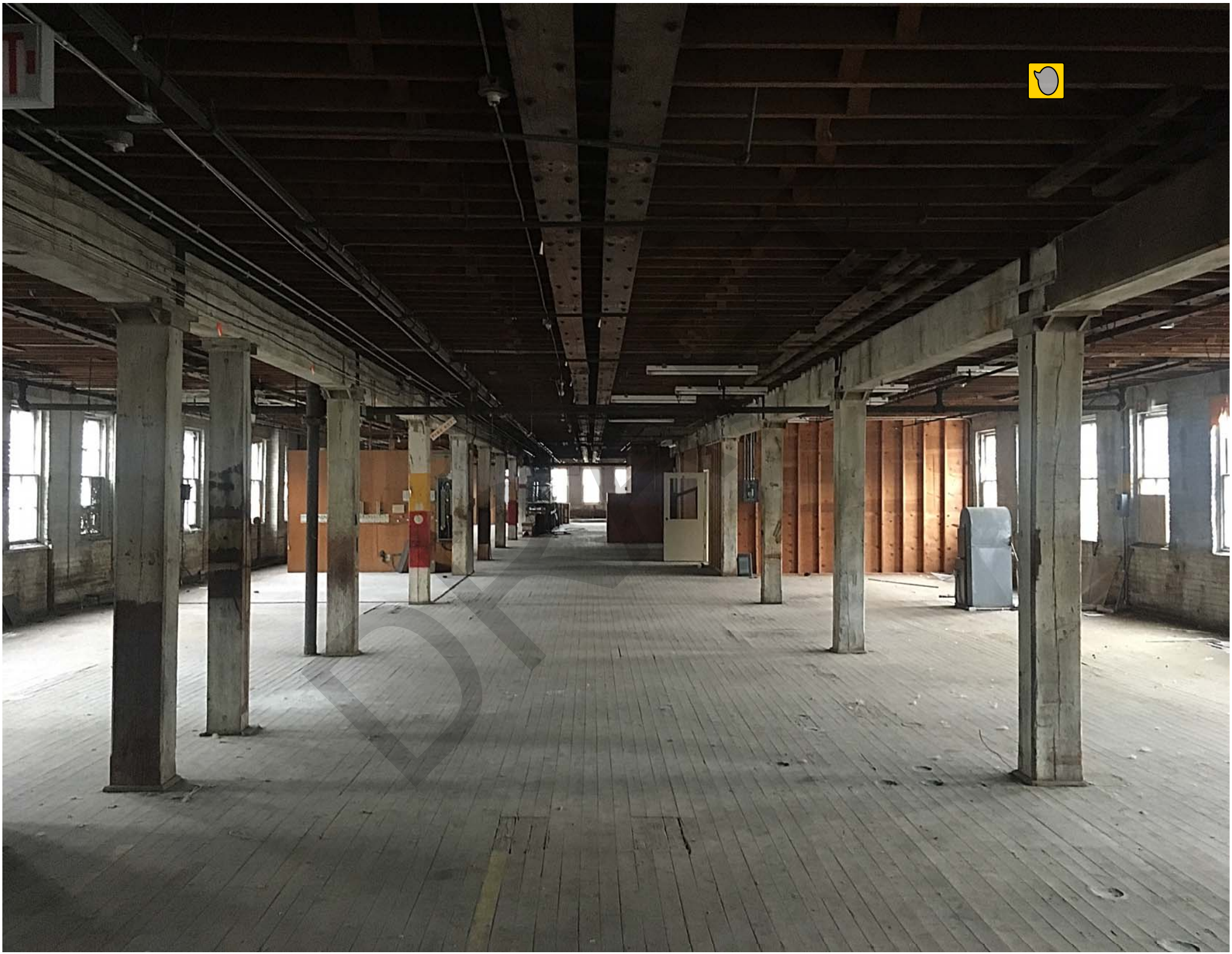

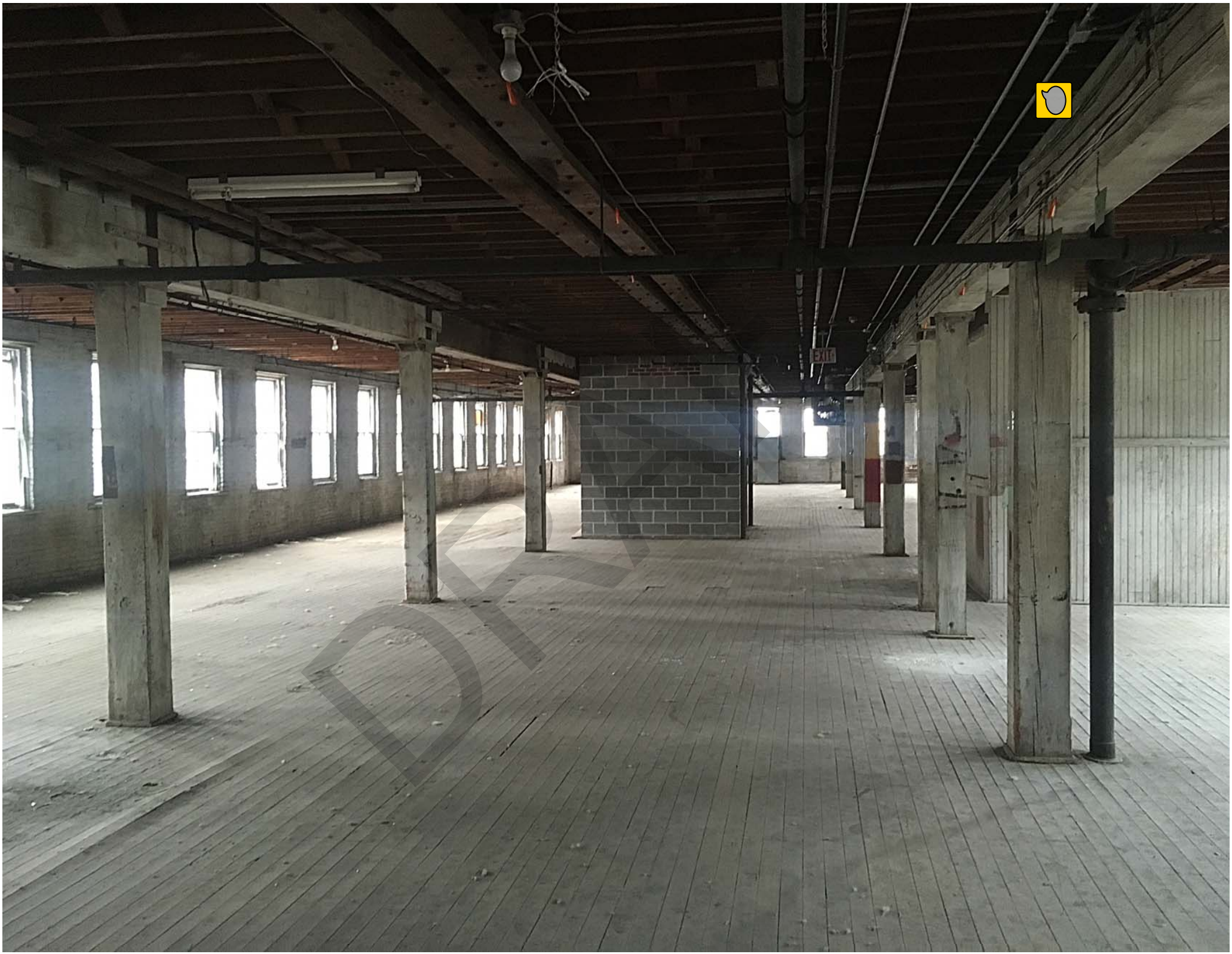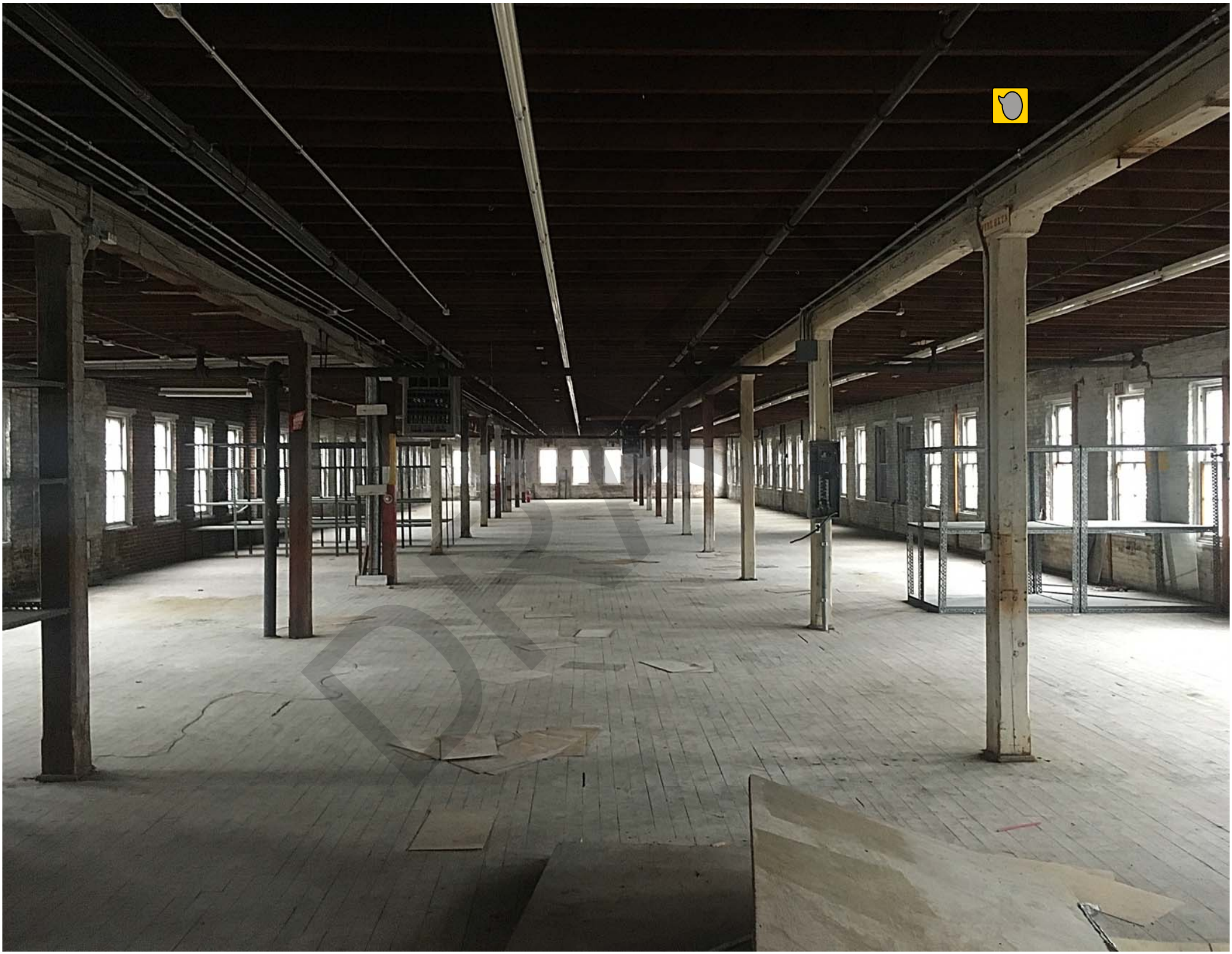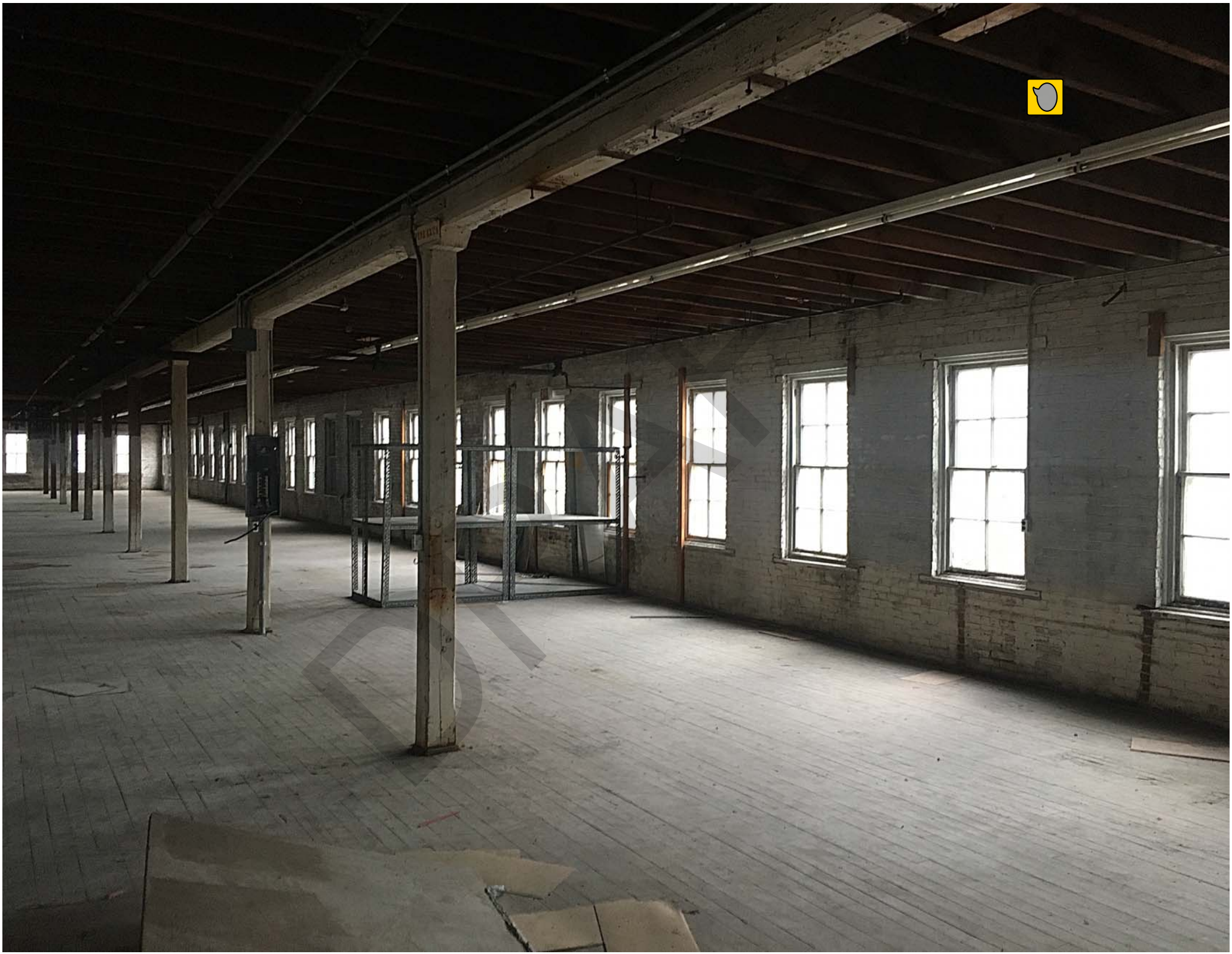
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