

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Meinig Glove Factory; E. Richard Meinig Co.

and or common Ellmar Mills

2. Location

street & number 612-632 McKnight Street; 621-641 McKnight Street NA not for publication

city, town Reading vicinity of

state PA code 19601 county Berks code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Ellmar Manufacturing, Inc. / Dimensions, Inc.

street & number 612-632 McKnight Street / 641 McKnight Street

city, town Reading vicinity of state PA 19601

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Berks County Courthouse

street & number 6th and Court Streets

city, town Reading state PA

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Pennsylvania Comprehensive Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 6/12/84 federal state county local

depository for survey records Bureau of Planning and Development; City Hall

city, town Reading state PA 19601

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date <u> N/A </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	in part		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The historic E. R. Meinig Company is a six-unit assemblage of brick buildings which are included in two properties that flank McKnight Street between West Oley Street and Greenwich Street, north of the old Lebanon Valley Railroad (now Conrail) tracks (Figure 1). The site is located mid-block, surrounded by a community of post-1884 row houses and duplex housing, causing the straightforward rectangular forms of the industrial buildings to contrast dramatically with the picturesque bays, turrets, and porches of the nearby homes (Plate 1).

The factory buildings feature traditional industrial building technology, with construction ranging in time from 1905 to 1958. Slow-burning mill construction (Plate 2), made up of heavy, chamfered, post-and-beam elements, is a common interior feature of all but the spaces intended as dyehouses and engine houses. Common exterior elements in Buildings A and B (west side of McKnight Street), include parapeted end-walls, roofs of shallow pitch, and foundations (where such apply) of coursed red sandstone. Windows, set in corbeled panels, are double-hung in frames of wood, with wooden sash generally in a 15/15 configuration. Window arches are expressed with three courses of header bricks; sills are tooled red sandstone. Buildings A and B, are connected in a "C" plan which relates to a brick-paved courtyard (Figure 2).

Buildings C-F (east side of McKnight Street) represent post-World War I plant expansion when, in addition to warping, knitting, dyeing, finishing, cutting, sewing and boarding ladies gloves and underwear, the Meinig Company added the manufacture of hosiery to its production capabilities. While these newer buildings maintain some of the architectural tradition established by the earlier complex, a systematic decline in sensitivity to details is obvious in each of the east-side buildings. Fenestration marks the most dramatic overall difference from the west-side prototype buildings. All four post-1915 buildings utilize large expanses of metal industrial windows, with fixed pivot windows the general choice and hopper windows (with their special operating and ventilating capacities) favored for Building C, which was built in part as a dye house.

Both properties presently function as light industrial spaces, with offices in Building A (west property) and Building F (east property). Knit sportswear is sewn and readied for shipment in the Ellmar (west) property while embroidery craft-kits are assembled in the Dimensions (east) property.

An inventory of all identifiable units, specifying, insofar as possible, original appearance and function as well as later changes, follows on Continuation Sheets 7A, 7B. In lieu of an historic document which records the buildings by name or number, this inventory has assigned an alphabetical/chronological reference letter to each unit, the basis for which was an on-site interview with Mr. Carl Meinig, youngest and only surviving son of the founder of the Meinig firm.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates	Builder/Architect	Raudenbusch Company
----------------	-------------------	---------------------

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Meinig Glove Factory was established in 1906 as a separately incorporated subsidiary of the Nolde and Horst Company, Reading's first hosiery manufacturer. A pioneer in the United States manufacture of ladies' fine silk gloves and Reading's only specialist glove firm from 1911 to post-World War II, the Meinig Company represents the contribution of a small family-controlled business to an epic era in United States glove manufacturing. Together with Nolde and Horst, who served as technological catalyst and venture capitalist for the younger firm, the Meinig Company was a vehicle for the significant contributions made by immigrant Germans in the post-1880 growth and prosperity of the region which had already enjoyed a long history of German culture. The remarkably intact millscape is itself significant in that it identifies one of Reading's latter-day light industries -- and a textile industry -- which strategically located itself in a newly developed threshold from which it could draw a cheap-and conscientious-labor force (LeFevre and Klick, 1984). Virtually pocketed within a post-1884 residential neighborhood, the glove factory - essentially a cottage industry that had become mechanized - in turn provided a convenient work place for local women and children, the operatives which best suited to the industry's "craft" needs. For those who lived elsewhere in the city, the local street railways provided convenient and affordable access to the factory in the newly developed northwest section of Reading. By virtue of uniqueness and association with German influence and location theory the Meinig Glove Factory holds strong local significance in the area of industry and commerce.

To put the significance and associative values in appropriate context, it is important to recognize the textile industry as one of Reading's earliest enterprises. As represented by felting and weaving operations, textile development began in the eighteenth century and intensified in the nineteenth century as technological innovation made possible the mass production of hats and woolen cloth. As a result of such advancement, nine hat factories in 1879 could produce 200,000 hats a year whereas in 1839 fourteen hat manufactories had produced only 55,000 hats (Hemmig, 1979:55). With Reading a major railroad center by 1979, the nine hatters and some of their woolen-mill counterparts were dealing with New York commissions houses who distributed the goods to merchants throughout the country. Knitting, meanwhile, had remained a cottage industry.

By the 1880s, as Reading entered the peak era of its industrial development, European technology had successfully mechanized knitting to the point that factories in England and Germany were not only producing fine quality stockings, but Chemnitz, in Saxony (Germany) had become the world center of modern fabric glovemaking (Ellis, 1921:93).

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Item number 7

Page 7A

Meinig Glove Factory
Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania

Description

Building-by-Building Inventory
Contributing Buildings

Building A is a four story brick building, "L" in plan and visually articulated into "bays" by corbeled recesses which frame segmentally arched, double-hung windows proportioned to both walls and niches. Contained within the existing fabric is the original rectangular block which has been obscured in part by subsequent additions. This original section, 210' x 50', is modeled after the main building of the Nolde and Horst Hosiery Mill, the first industrial building in Reading to incorporate fire towers into the architectural scheme (Montgomery, 1909:173). While the original block featured two such visible towers on the northeast and the southeast termini (Figure 2), the southerly tower is now incorporated within a southwest addition. The seven story northwest element, however, survives intact, providing a campanile-like element to the otherwise boxy building. A water drum set on a bracketed platform surrounds the tower two stories above the principal roofline, just as was intended in 1909 (Plates 4, 6; Figure 3). Two balconies which allow exterior access to the towers also survive in the south wall (Plates 5, 7) and on the south wall of the north ell (Plate 8).

Appended to the southwest stair tower and probably built c.1915 is the four-story southwest addition, 52' x 68', which continues the rhythms and proportions established by the main block. Added to this is a four-story hyphen, 30' x 40', inserted between the south addition and Building B to serve as a utility tower (stairs and toilets). Also constructed of brick, this conforms to the detailing of the larger spaces. As the major component of the original Glove Factory, Building A provides a strong contribution to the significance of the property.

Building B is a two-story brick building 130' x 25' (Plates 6, 9, 10). Set on grade, this first served a dual function as the engine house (north end) and the dyehouse (south end), with the finishing room on the second floor. Later, when a new dye house was built on the east property, a silk winding room was set up here on the first floor, appropriately setting aside space for the "good winding...regarded as essential to good knitting: (Ellis, 1921:102). In the later years, however, new fibers (nylon and rayon) were delivered process-ready, causing a change in function to the former warping and winding space which was then relegated to inspection, (Meinig, 1985). Adjacent to the old dye house is a narrow, one-story aisle space, 90' x 10', whose detailing and roof construc-

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Meinig Glove Factory
Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania

Description

tion compare favorably with similar elements in the old dyehouse (Plate 11). Probably built while the 54' stack of the original engine house was still intact (see Figure 2), the "aisle" is located immediately south of the former location of that stack and it opens to the uninterrupted 130' x 25' space of the old dyehouse. Building B as a principal original building, contributes to the history of the complex.

Building C, located on the east-side property (621-641 McKnight Street) is a high one-story brick building, 190' x 55', comprised of two principal spaces. On the exterior, the north and south walls a three-bay configuration set into a shallow, parapeted gable (Plate 12). All windows are metal, set between concrete lintels and brick sills; most windows are currently covered for protection from vandals. On the interior, the southerly space, probably an engine house in the 1920s, is partially lit by a monitor at the ridgeline; the longer, north space is partially lit by skylights on the roof's east slope. This ample space, unhampered by posts and beams, features mezzanines at the north and south ends, the upper north space relating in part to an office and the upper south space relating in part to toilets. A range of kingpost-pinned trusses supports the roof (Plate 13). Building F long served as a dyehouse and now is utilized as a shipping room for Dimensions, Inc. By reference to historic function and by reason of integrity, Building F contributes to the significance of the property.

Building D is a four-story-plus-basement brick building, 45' x 118'. Its east wall is open at the north corner about fifty feet to connect with Building F. Following the pattern established by the predecessor buildings, Building D is essentially a post-and-beam structure with some of the timber members having been replaced by steel I members. Used today -- and only in part -- for assembling craft kits, this building was constructed to add to glove manufacture and to house the apparatus necessary for the manufacture of hosiery. Steel windows with pivoting centers survive on the second and third floors; the first and fourth floor openings have been infilled with brick (Plate 14), all openings nevertheless are identified by concrete lintels and brick sills. Enough of the original fabric survives in Building D to indicate that it contributes to the significant time period associated with the complex.

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Meinig Glove Factory
Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania

Intrusions:

Building E is a two-story brick building, 40' x 60', built c.1941 as an engine house which served the composite plant. This is essentially an unarticulated brick box, its parapeted walls featuring a terra-cotta coping. On the McKnight Street face, four metal windows, set high above grade, once lit the boiler room; two of these have been infilled however, and the former coal hopper used as an entrance to a below-grade loading dock. A portion of the fire brick chimney stack is still visible on the roof (Plate 14). Building E lacks significance because it is outside the period of significance, (1906-1935).

Description

Building F is a two-story brick building, 22' x 55', (Plate 14). Like the 1941 engine house, this is an unarticulated structure pierced with occasional window and door openings. Presently the offices for Dimensions, Inc., this represents an enlargement of a one-story drug room recorded on the site in a c.1925 photograph (Plate 15). Although the entrance and the south front window of the McKnight Street facade compare favorably with original features of the one-story drug room, Building F lacks structural integrity, and reads as a post-1932 building thus lessening the degree to which it contributes to the complex as a pre-1935 millscape.

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Meinig Glove Factory
Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania

Significance

The origins of the modern fabric glove dates from the middle of the nineteenth century when the first warp knitting machine for glove fabric was invented in England. After 1860, when England repealed a duty on imported gloves, Germany with its cheap labor established a world monopoly in the fabric glove. German mills then imported large quantities of the fine spun yarns used for glove fabric from England, and until World War I Germany remained supreme (Ellis, 1921:93).

The manufacture of fabric gloves follows closely the procedure of leather glovemaking. Fabric - whether it be milanese, tricot, or other fine types, is first knitted and finished in pieces twelve to forty yards long. Once the fabrics are inspected, they are cut into shorter lengths and divided into trunks. Glove pieces are then cut with calipers and screw-presses which cut several pieces at a time. Sewing is the final procedure before final inspection. Such a process remained essentially unchanged for almost a century.

About 1885 Jacob Nolde (1859-1916), a native of Westphalia (Germany), immigrated to Reading and soon took up employment at the woolen mills at Stoney Creek. While he worked at the mill during the day, at night Nolde worked steadily over a hand-operated machine, knitting seamless hosiery which he then marketed. By April 18, 1888 Jacob Nolde had established the area's first powered hosiery mill in a property on Cedar Street. In 1890, George Horst (1863-1834) a native of Schleswig-Holstein and also only recently in America, went into business with Nolde and together they built a hosiery mill near Mott Street (Nolde and Horst, 1936:n.p.). By 1893 the partners were producing the latest European development, full-fashioned hosiery. Success was so great that in 1899, when fire destroyed the first mill, Nolde and Horst rebuilt immediately, improving upon their original investment by purchasing additional land and constructing a larger mill which made use of slow-burning mill construction and fire walls. The 1900 Nolde and Horst factory was the first factory in Reading to incorporate fire-stair towers in the architectural scheme (Montgomery, 1909:173).

Ernst Richard Meinig (1874-1948), a native of Chemnitz, traveled to Reading in 1900 to visit friends. Skilled in Germany's unique methods of knitting, dyeing, and finishing glove materials, Meinig found a job in the Reading Glove and Mitten Company, a new venture begun in 1899 by a local woolen miller. Meinig rose through the ranks until by 1902 he had become superintendent of Reading's first silk glove factory, a small operation which even with new investment, failed to survive the Panic of 1907. In 1903 young Meinig married Maria Catrina Vogt, the German-born niece of George Horst and in 1905 George Horst put Meinig into the

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Meinig Glove Factory
Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania

Significance

silk glove business, importing both the knitting machines and the silk (Meinig, 1985). By 1906, the E. Richard Meinig Company was housed in Buildings A and B of the McKnight Street property, in buildings constructed by the same contractor who had worked in the Nolde and Horst factory in 1900 (Meinig, 1985). Like their prototypes, the two impressive brick buildings of the Meinig Glove Factory were visually articulated by piers bays which formed well-proportioned but oversized windows. From the inside-out, the factory and the dye-house-and-engine house were significant in their attention to both structural principals and design factors. The factory was set up in spaces which allowed for both the several hundred sewing machines, and for the longitudinal needs attending knitting machines; the dye house and engine house on the other hand, concentrated on the open spaces necessary for housing vats and boilers. On the exterior; furthermore, the terminal stairtowers demonstrated a sensitivity to both architecture and unity (Figures 1 and 2).

While the Meinig-Horst venture in glovemaking was getting underway on the subject property, George Horst also became involved in other satellite industries, investing also in the local manufacture of weft knitting machines which produced hosiery. The warp knitting machines, needed for the fine fabric which was used for gloves, he continued to import from Germany (Meinig, 1985).

While the E. Richard Meinig Company (George Horst, president; E. R. Meinig, Secretary-Treasurer) established early success in its venture, the Reading Glove and Mitten Company, first led by A. J. Brumbach and then by John Barbey, soon went out of business. After 1911, the Meinig Glove Factory was the only business of its kind in Reading (Boyd, 1911-1935). By 1915 when war in Europe improved America's position in world trade the fabric glove industry nationwide took advantage of an opportunity to expand. America's new world market was enhanced in 1918 when a bankrupt Germany and a world-wide shortage of skins for leather goods enabled the United States to take the lead in fabric glove manufacture. Once it was a part of this intensive national growth pattern, the Meinig Company expanded its operations to include the east side of McKnight Street, also operating hosiery factories on 12th Street and on the Kutztown Road (Boyd, 1918-1935). While the utilities were moved in the 1920s to new buildings on the east side, the glove manufacturing remained in the original Building A. Using the same fabrics processed for gloves, the company also began to produce ladies' underwear in 1923 (Chamber of Commerce, 1923:21-8).

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Meinig Glove Factory
Reading, Berks County, Pennsylvania

Significance

By 1938, the Meinig Company specialized in gloves, glove silk, and rayon and silk underwear. Whereas in 1918, Building A had been equipped with 54 knitting machines and 500 sewing machines (Boyd, 1918:362), the factories which flanked McKnight Street by 1938 were equipped with 72 tricot machines; 500 sewing machines; 5,364 spools, 65 winders, 37 twistors and 11 warpers (Davison, 1938:226). To survive the rigors of the Depression at this time, Meinig had entered into a commercial consortium with the Clark Brothers of Glens Falls, New York, Merrill Silk Company of Hornell, New York, forming Merrill, Clark and Meinig and marketing under the "Shalimar" label. (According to the New York SHPO, neither of the other properties is extant.) During World War II the knitting machines were put to work producing insulated gloves and mittens for the military, using the "Wearite" label (Meinig, 1985).

Following World War II the company produced nylon goods but soon thereafter, when fashions changed more radically than they had in half a century and women no longer commonly wore gloves to complete a costume, the industry nationwide went into a slump. In Reading, as elsewhere, the great and little textile industries were either put to new commercial use or were vacated and torn down. It is to the benefit of the city's cultural heritage that the Meinig Company, with its unique role in local glove manufacture and its two generations of factory buildings, including dyehouses and other ancillary spaces, has survived intact.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet 9A

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1.250 a.

Quadrangle name Reading

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	1 8	4 2 0 3 6 5	4 4 6 6 3 5 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	1 8	4 2 0 4 6 0	4 4 6 6 2 7 5
E			
G			

B	1 8	4 2 0 4 6 0	4 4 6 6 3 5 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D	1 8	4 2 0 3 6 5	4 4 6 6 2 7 5
F			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet 10A

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	county	code
state	<u>PA</u>	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Alice Kent Schooler, Principal Architectural Historian

organization John Milner Associates, Inc. date March 27, 1985

street & number 309 North Matlack Street telephone (215) 436-9000

city or town West Chester state PA 19380

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer

date 5/24/85

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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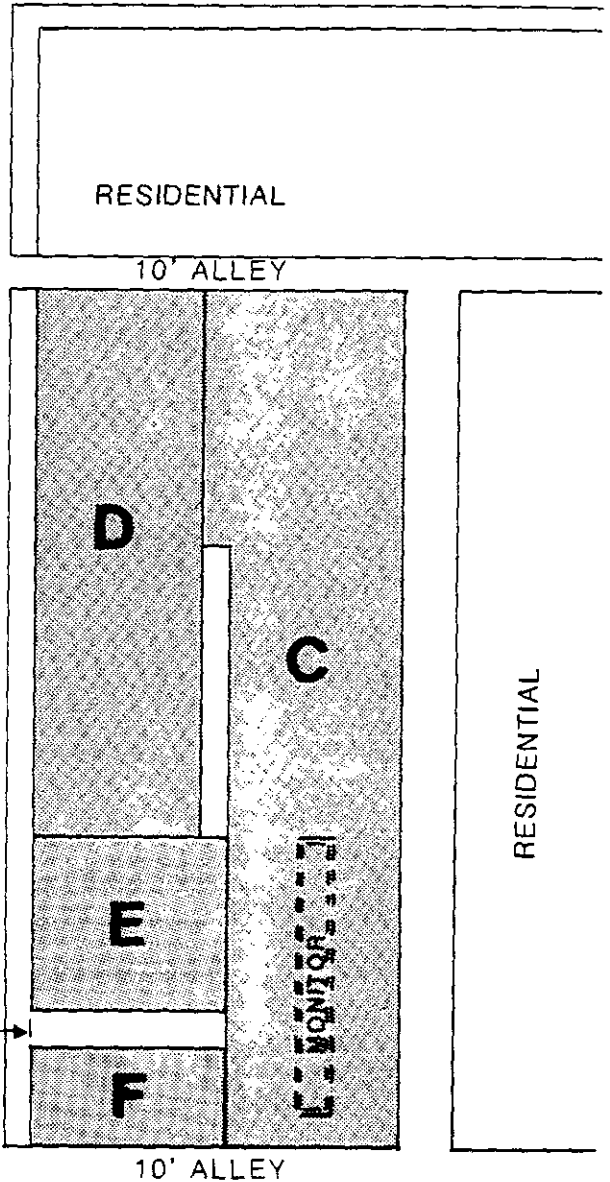
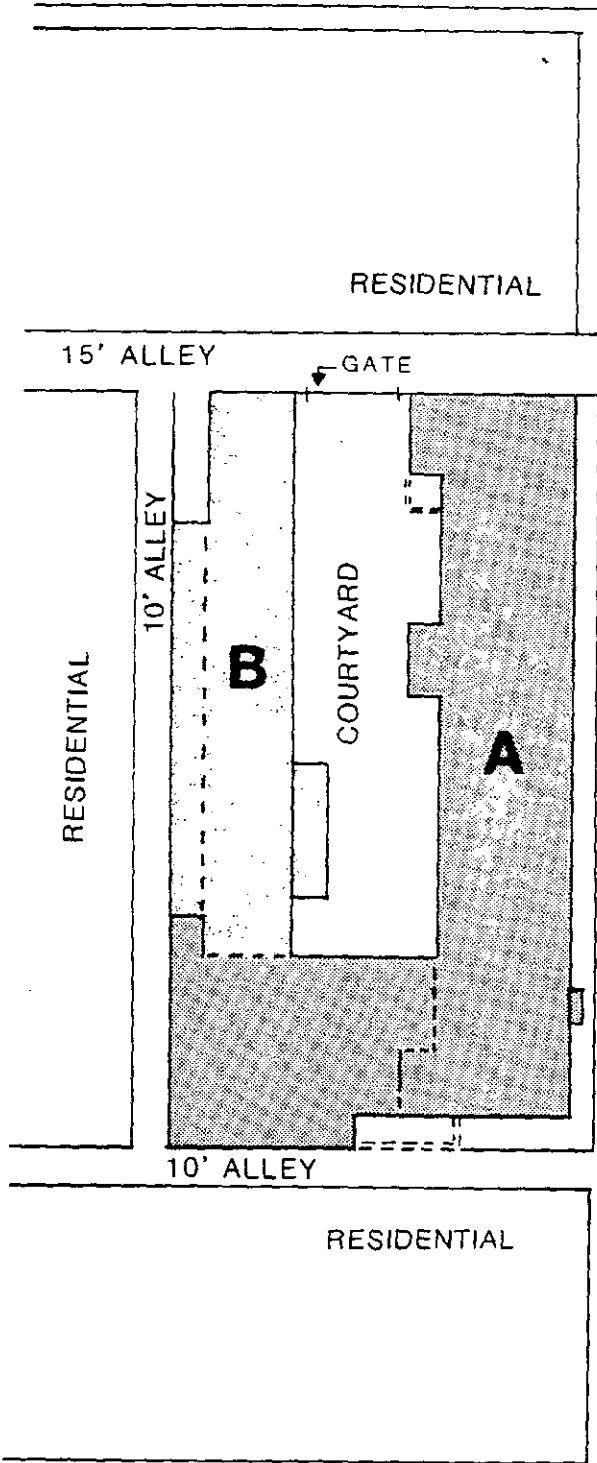
Boundary Description

West Section: Beginning at an alley ninety feet north of the northwest corner of Greenwich and McKnight Streets, to a ten foot alley, thence North along the property now of Ellmar Manufacturing Company, two hundred and fifteen feet to a fifteen foot alley, thence west along an alley one hundred and thirty-five feet to a point, thence south along another alley two hundred and fifteen feet to the first alley, thence east one hundred and thirty-five feet to McKnight Street and the point of beginning.

East Section: Beginning at an alley ninety feet north of the North-east corner of Greenwich and McKnight Streets to a ten foot alley, thence north along the property of Dimensions, Inc. two hundred and thirty feet to another ten foot alley, thence east along said alley one hundred and ten feet to another alley thence south along said alley to the first alley, thence east one hundred and two feet to the point of beginning.


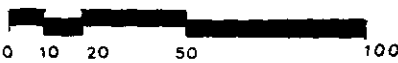
Boundary Justification: The above contains the buildings and service areas relating to two properties which bear historic reference to the E. R. Meinig and Company factory (Figure 2).

OLEY STREET



SITE PLAN

E. RICHARD MEINIG CO.
 612-30 MCKNIGHT ST.
 621-641 MCKNIGHT ST.
 READING, PA.

GREENWICH STREET

---- LOCATION OF PREVIOUS WALLS
 === BALCONIES

Figure 2



Meinig Glove Factory
Reading, Berks Co., PA.
Zone 18, Reading Quad

A.	420 365	4466 350
B.	420 460	4466 350
C.	420 460	4466 275
D.	420 365	4466 275.