

Belt's Wharf (B-1016)
Baltimore City
private, early 19c.

Statement of Significance

Heavy commercial activity in Fells Point during the nineteenth century created a need for storage facilities for the goods that were shipped through the port. Belt's Wharf Warehouses served this need, and continues to do so today. It is probably the oldest continually run warehouse facility in Baltimore, dating back to at least the early nineteenth century.

Survey No. B-1016

Magi No. 0410165333

DOE yes no

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Belt's Wharf

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 936 Fell Street not for publication

city, town Baltimore vicinity of _____ congressional district _____

state Maryland county _____

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture <input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial <input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational <input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment <input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government <input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial <input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military <input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Belt's Wharf Warehouses, Inc.

street & number 936 Fell Street telephone no.: 301-342-1110

city, town Baltimore state and zip code Maryland 21231

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore City Courthouse liber SCL 3271

street & number Fayette and Calvert Streets folio 3

city, town Baltimore state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title _____

date _____ federal state county local

repository for survey records _____

city, town _____

state _____

7. Description

Survey No. B-1016

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 type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date of move _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Belt's Wharf, an assemblage of structures dating from the early to the late 19th century, is an excellent illustration of the organic nature of much early warehouse architecture. Most of the earliest structures on the site were originally row houses along Fell Street but at least one of them is a warehouse building of a style once common but now very rare. Two of the houses, #843 and #845 Fell Street, retain their original facades (although they have been slightly altered) and are still in use of the company's offices. The remaining structures are concealed behind two industrial facades, one from the 1870s and the other from the 20th century. Only the interior reveals the great variety of over 150 years of building technology present in this complex.

The oldest warehouse building is a steep gable-roofed structure at the northwest corner of the complex. It is hidden by the 1890s warehouse between it and Fell Street, but the original roofline can be seen on the north facade. The rear roof slope is still visible from the water. The front slope has been removed and replaced by a new pitch which meets the flat roof of the main building.

The main warehouse is seven bays wide and three stories in height, of brick masonry construction with an elaborate corbelled cornice. On the top story each bay has two over four over four sash windows. On the second story the two end bays on each side are large loading doors indicating that there was no elevator when the structure was built. A sack chute and hoist were used to move freight between the third floor and the second floor where it could be loaded out the doors. Elevators later made freight doors on upper floors unnecessary. Behind the south two bays of this facade are the remains of an earlier structure which was simply incorporated. Several shed additions extend out onto the pier behind the principal mass.

South of the 1870's facade is a twentieth century facade which hides several earlier structures. At least one of these is a late eighteenth century house. The gable roof of this structure still remains, complete with hewn joists, hand split lathe and plaster walls. A series of late nineteenth century masonry and timber warehouses once stood on the waterfront behind this house. All have since been joined under one roof, creating a maze of small rooms with varying floor heights.

8. Significance

Survey No. B-1016

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input 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
check: Applicable Criteria: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D	
and/or Applicable Exception: <input type="checkbox"/> A <input type="checkbox"/> B <input type="checkbox"/> C <input type="checkbox"/> D <input type="checkbox"/> E <input type="checkbox"/> F <input type="checkbox"/> G	
Level of Significance: <input type="checkbox"/> national <input type="checkbox"/> state <input type="checkbox"/> local	

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

Heavy commercial activity in Fells Point during the nineteenth century created a need for storage facilities for the goods that were shipped through the port. Belt's Wharf Warehouses served this need, and continues to do so today. It is probably the oldest continually run warehouse facility in Baltimore, dating back to at least the early nineteenth century.

Fells Point has been an important area of port activity in Baltimore since the eighteenth century, when its deeper harbor was preferred over Baltimore Town's. The busy port spawned many commercial establishments in Fells Point that imported and exported a wide variety of goods. These in turn created the need for storage and cargo handling facilities. Belt's Wharf, founded in Fells Point in the early nineteenth century, is one such warehouse company.

Belt's Wharf has been witness to many changes at the Port of Baltimore. Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, warehousing

Belt's Wharf (B-1016)
Baltimore City, Maryland
8.1

was generally an insecure and unorganized business. People with rental property would let space for storage, but the goods usually received little attention. Minimal effort was made to store materials in a suitable manner, and few security precautions were taken. On occasion, confusion arose as to which goods belonged to whom. In the 1870's, however, the Maryland Legislature passed laws regulating the system of warehousing, including the proscribed use of receipts. By 1900, every article in a shipment was numbered and tagged and recorded on lists which were kept by both the merchant and the warehouse operator.

Methods of cargo handling have also changed in the many years that Belt's Wharf has been in operation. Traditionally, stevedores loaded and unloaded ships with ropes, hooks, slings, nets, block and tackle and plenty of hard work. These techniques left cargo open to damage and theft. In the twentieth century, cranes, conveyors and forklift trucks became available, which eased the stevedores work. Today, most cargo is palletized and packed into containers by the shipper. Containers are not unloaded until they reach their final destination.

Belt's Wharf currently advertises 150,000 square feet of dockside space at their Fell Street location. They are specialists in grocery products and import freight, and also deal with green coffee and canned and frozen meat. They offer reconditioning, reconditioning and relabeling services, heated space, private B&O Railroad sidings and burglar and fire protection.

HAER INVENTORY

Historic American Engineering Record
Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20240

1. SITE I.D. NO. **B-1016**

2. INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION

3. PRIORITY

4. DANGER OF DEMOLITION? (SPECIFY THREAT) YES NO UNKNOWN

5. DATE **early 19th c.**

6. GOVT SOURCE OF THREAT

7. OWNER/ADMIN **Swall Brown III / Belts Wharf Warehouses**

8. NAME(S) OF STRUCTURE **Belts Wharf Warehouse**

9. OWNER'S ADDRESS **936 Fell Street**

10. STATE COUNTY **M D** COUNTY NAME **Baltimore** CITY/VICINITY **Baltimore** CONG. DIST.

11. SITE ADDRESS (STREET & NO.) **936 Fell Street**

12. EXISTING SURVEYS NR NHL HABS HAER-I HAER NPS CLB CONF STATE COUNTY LOCAL OTHER

13. SPECIAL FEATURES (DESCRIBE BELOW): INTERIOR INTACT EXTERIOR INTACT ENVIRONS INTACT

14. UTM ZONE EASTING NORTHING SIGN SCALE 1:24 1:62.5 QUAD NAME **Baltimore East**

1: 8 3627194349115

15. CONDITION 70 EXCELLENT 71 GOOD 72 FAIR 73 DETERIORATED 74 RUINS 75 UNEXPOSED 76 ALTERED 82 DESTROYED 85 DEMOLISHED

16. INVENTORIED BY: **Ann Steele** AFFILIATION **Baltimore Museum of Industry** DATE **5/83**

17. DESCRIPTION AND BACKGROUND HISTORY, INCLUDING CONSTRUCTION DATE(S), HISTORICAL DATE(S), PHYSICAL DIMENSIONS, MATERIALS, EXTANT EQUIPMENT, AND IMPORTANT BUILDERS, ENGINEERS, ETC.

See attached

18. ORIGINAL USE PRESENT USE ADAPTIVE USE

19. REFERENCES - HISTORICAL REFERENCES, PERSONAL CONTACTS AND/OR OTHER **Interviews w/ Sewall Brown**

20. URBAN AREA 50,000 POP. OR MORE? YES NO

21. NPS REGION

22. PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY YES, LIMITED YES, UNLIMITED NO UNKNOWN

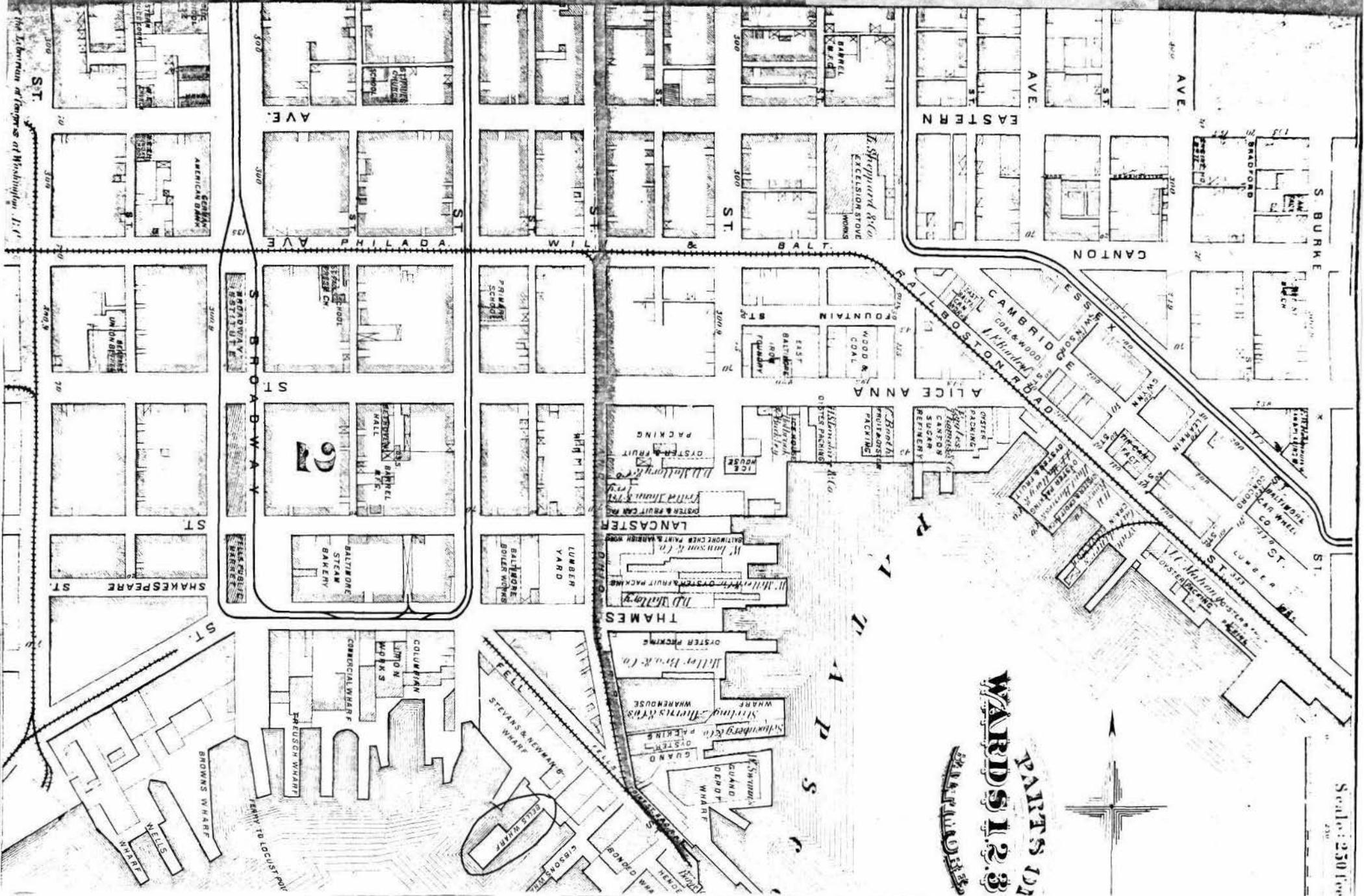
23. EDITOR INDEXER

24. LOCATED IN AN HISTORIC DISTRICT? YES NO NAME DISTRICT I.D. NO

BELT'S WHARF
BALTIMORE CITY, MD.

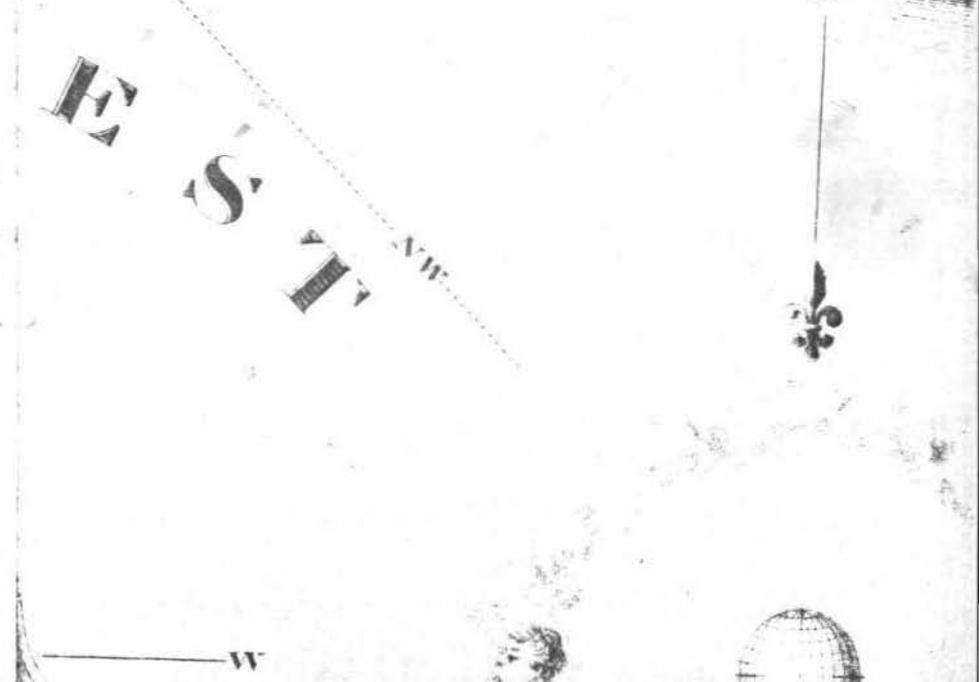
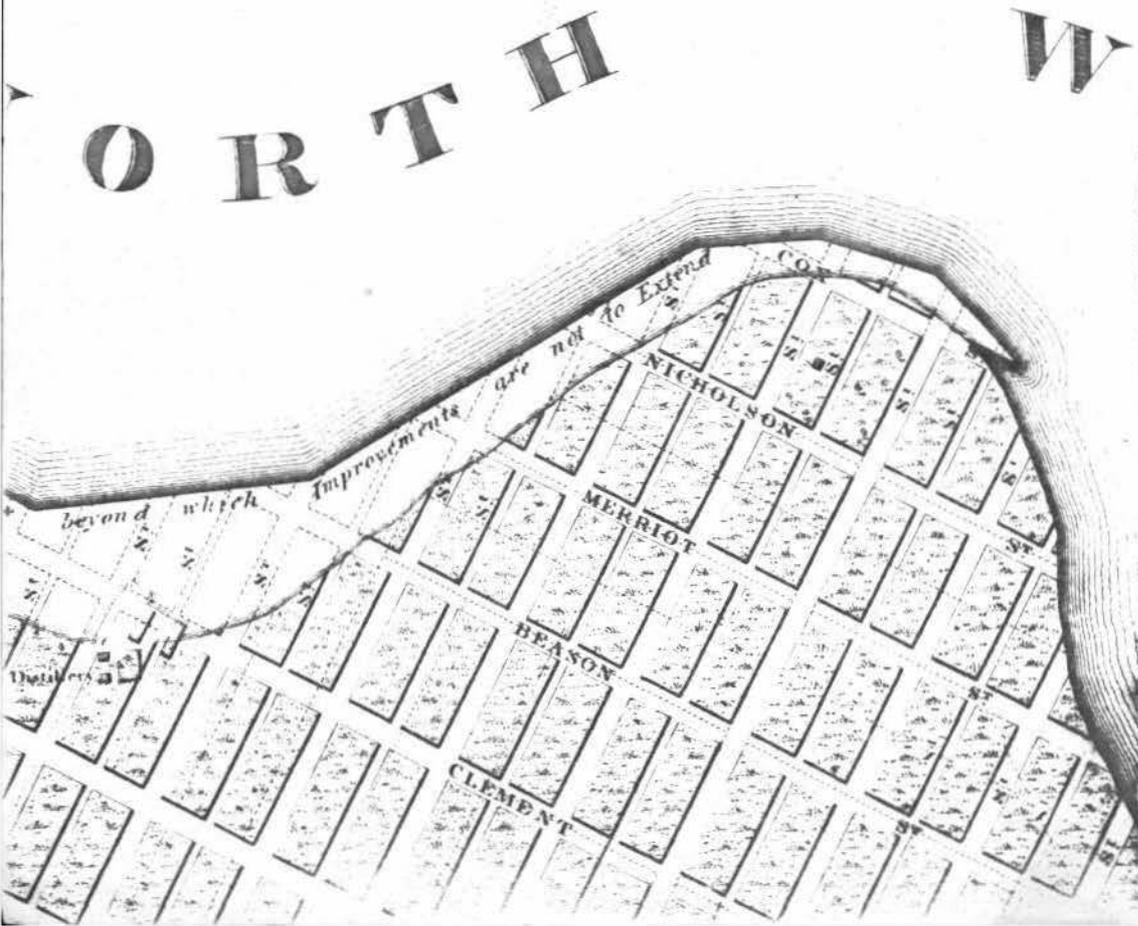
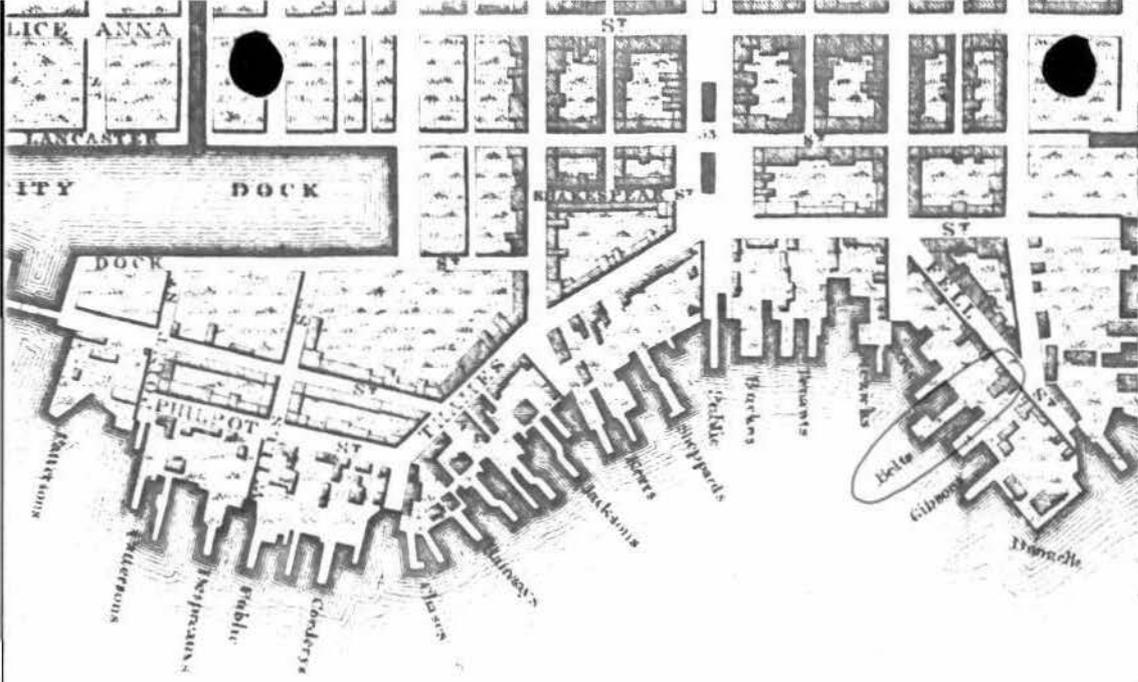
B-1016

HOPKIN'S ATLAS 1876



WARD'S 1, 2, 3

Scale: 250' = 1"



BELT'S WHARF B-1016
BALTIMORE CITY, MD.

1823 POPPLETON MAP

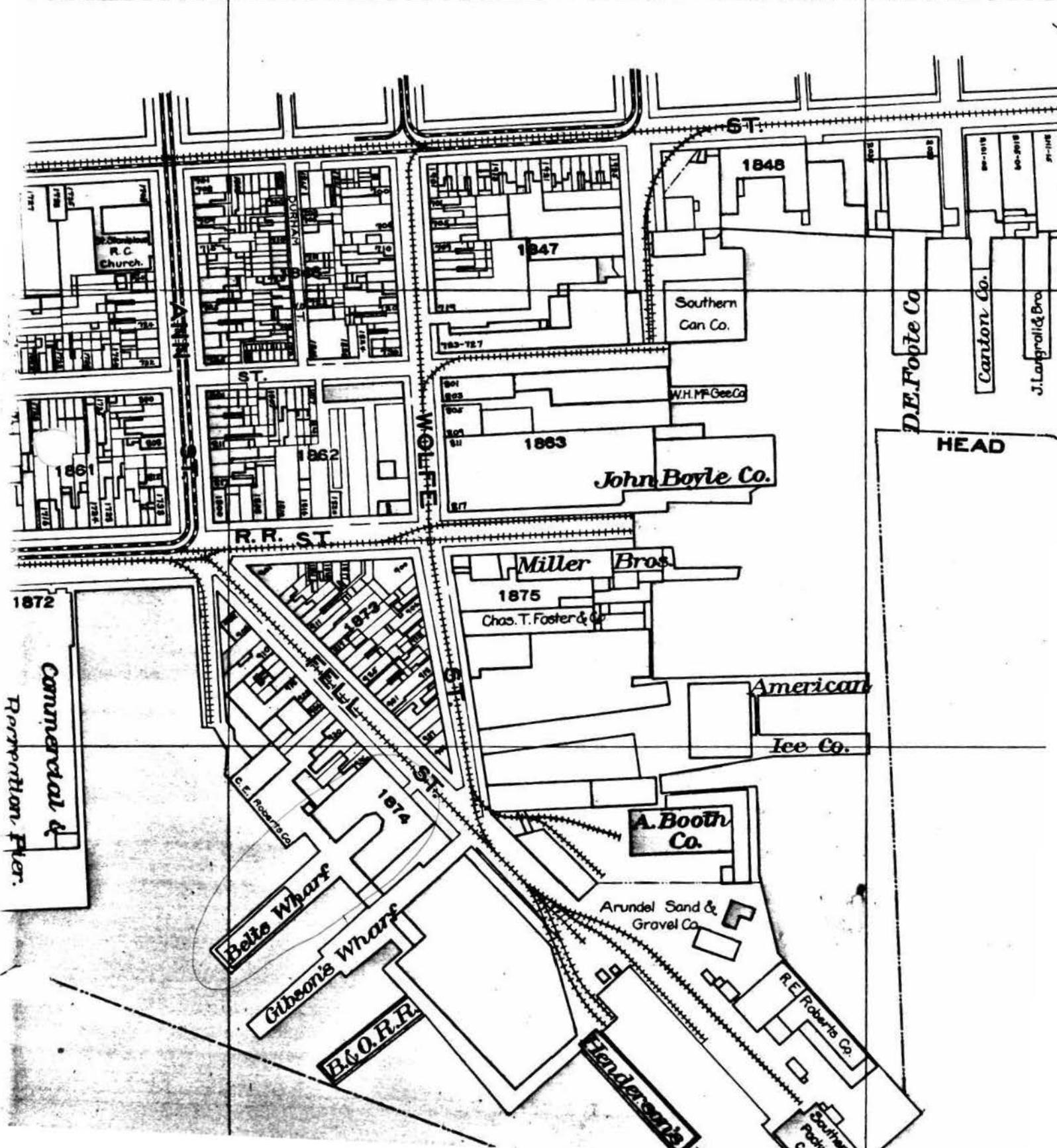
BELT'S WHARF
BALTIMORE CITY, MD

B-1016

1914 BROMLEY ATLAS

7,000' EAST.

8,000' EAST.



American Ice
1914





BELT'S WHARF
BALTIMORE CITY, MD. B-1016

U.S.G.S. 7.5* BALTO. EAST QUAD
U.S.G.S. 18³ 62719 43 49115



Bett's Wharf B-1016

Baltimore City, Md

Peter Liebhold 5183

~~NORTHEAST FACADE~~

A black and white photograph of a brick building facade. The building features several arched windows. A prominent sign is mounted on the brickwork, displaying the text "HOUSES, INC." in large, bold, white capital letters. The sign is rectangular with a white border and is set against the dark brick background. The word "HOUSES" is followed by a comma and "INC.", which is underlined. The building's facade is made of dark bricks, and the windows are arched and appear to be multi-paned. The overall image has a high-contrast, grainy quality typical of a black and white photograph.

Belt's Wharf B-101b

Baltimore City, Md

Peter Liebhold 5183

S.W. Facade

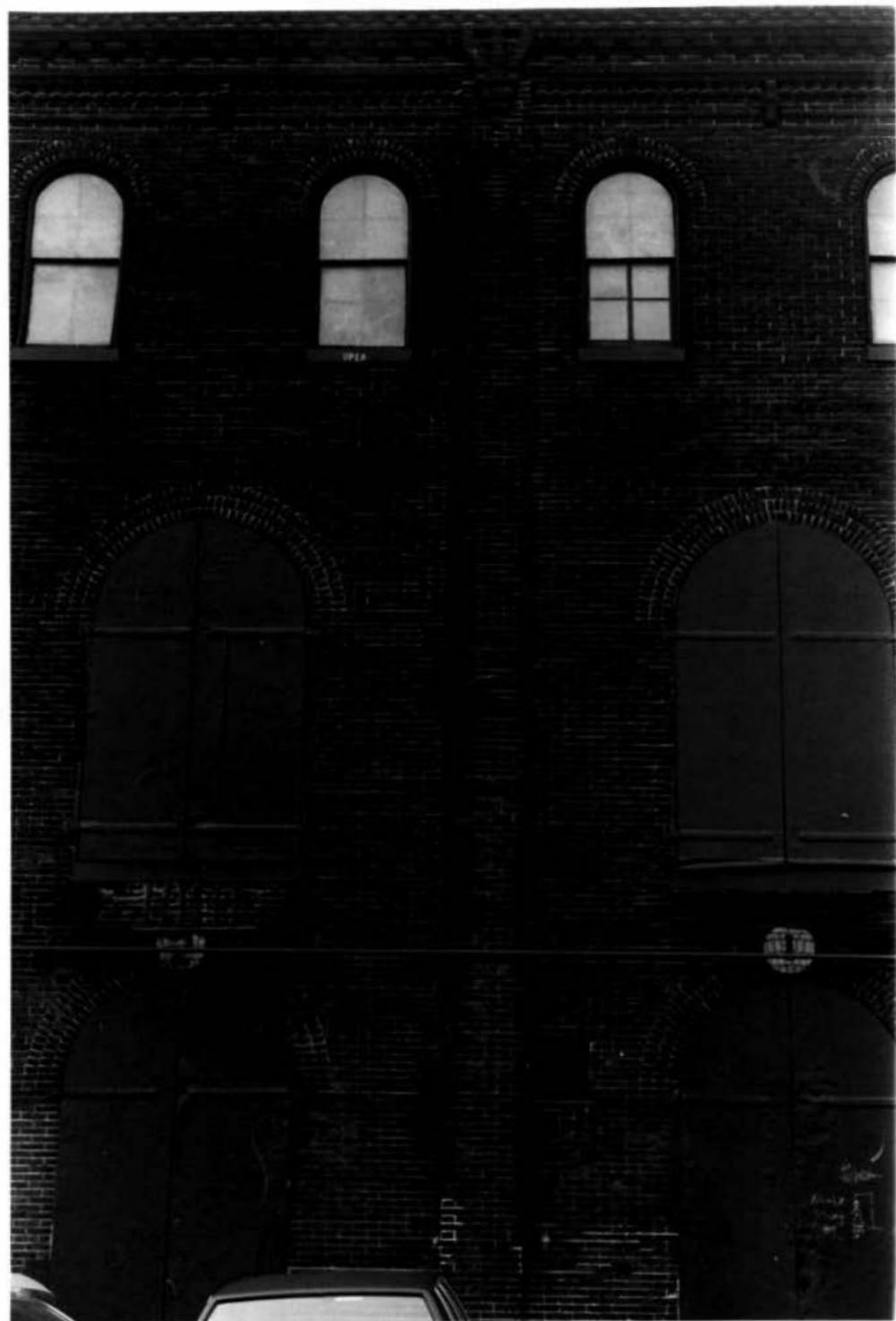


Belts wharf
Baltimore city, Md

B-1016

Peter Liebhold 5183

Looking N.E. at Rear of Building from roof. ROOF



Belt's Wharf B-1014

Baltimore City, Md

Peter Liebhold. 5183

S. W. Facade.



CAUTION
CHOCK
WHEELS

Belt's Wharf

B-1016

Baltimore City, Md

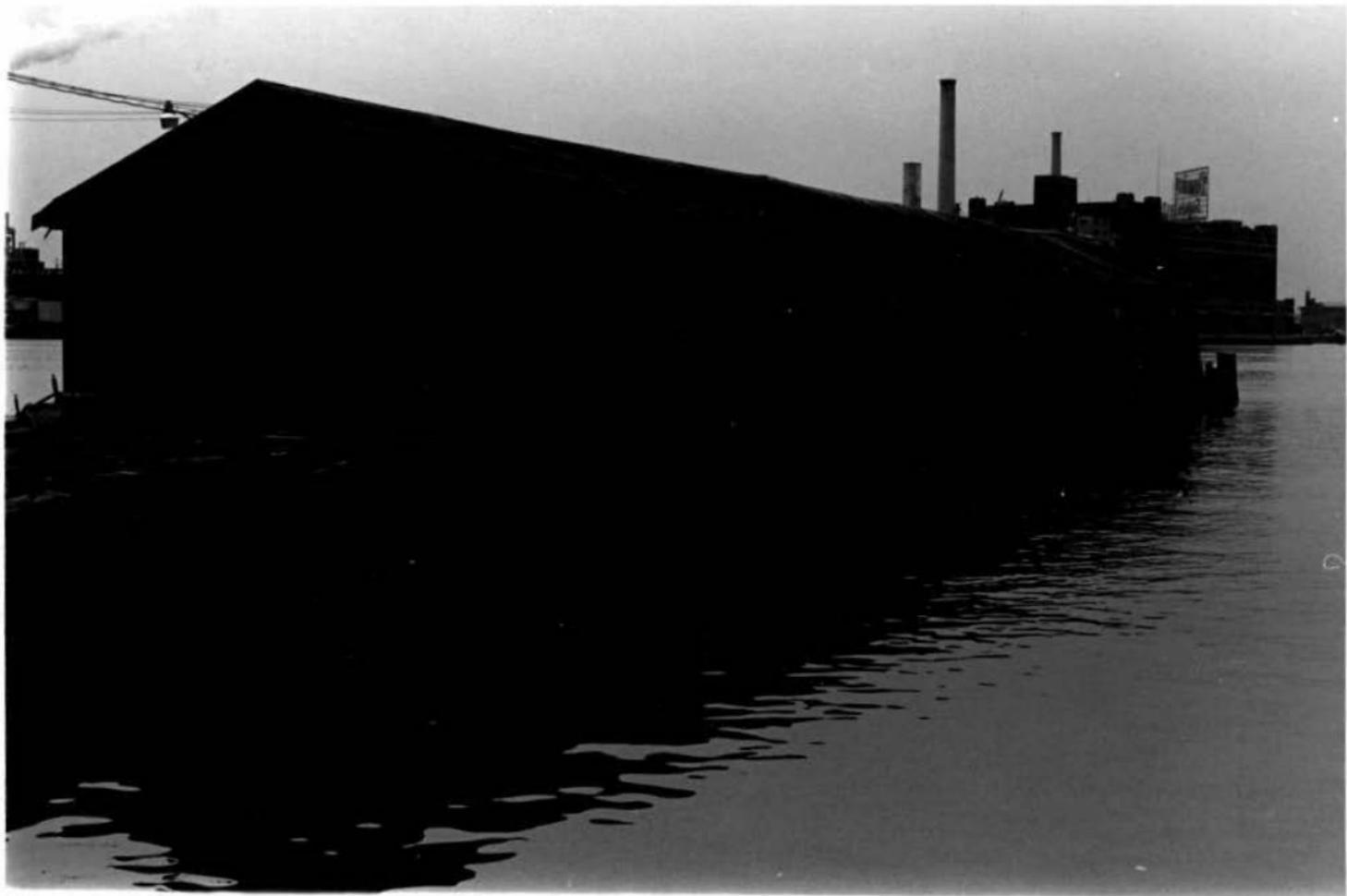
Peter Liebhold 5183

Loading Bay 1st Floor Front



Belt's Wharf
Baltimore City, Md
Peter Liebhold 5183.
Roof detail 3rd Floor Front

B-1016



Belt's Wharf

B-1016

Baltimore City, Md

Peter Liekhold 5/83

Cargo Pier, Looking ~~West~~ South



Be It's Wharf
Baltimore City, Md

B-1016

END OF PIER

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Looking N.E. at rear of building from end of pier