

Locke Insulators Inc. (private, 1920)
B-1039
Baltimore City, Md.
Statement of Significance

Locke Insulators, manufacturers of porcelain electrical insulators, have been innovators in the electrical industry since 1893. In addition to pioneering the first porcelain insulators, they invented and popularized many other varieties of insulators. Locke Insulators, which has been in Baltimore since 1920, is currently the largest supplier of electrical insulators in the country. The Baltimore complex is one of the city's best examples of early modern factory architecture, and one of the few surviving examples of the Art Deco style.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Locke Insulators Inc.

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 2525 Insulator Drive not for publication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 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 checked="" 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 General Electric Company

street & number 2525 Insulator Drive telephone no.: 301-752-8020

city, town Baltimore state and zip code Md. 21230

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore City Courthouse liber RHB 3106

street & number Fayette and Calvert Streets folio 688

city, town Baltimore state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title None

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. B-1039

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date of move _____

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

The Locke Insulator Company complex is one of Baltimore's finest examples of early modern factory and Art Deco architecture.

The most distinctive feature of this complex is the larger brick masonry testing building that occupies the northwest corner of the Locke Insulator site at Cromwell Street and Insulator Drive. The structure has very little fenestration since its purpose is to form a high, isolated room where the firm's ceramic high-tension line insulators can be tested under high voltage in relative safety. Externally the building is in the Art Deco style. Horizontal bands are formed by indenting every fifth course of bricks by a half. Four limestone bands with geometrical figures of brick at the roof level make this one of the few Art Deco industrial buildings in Baltimore. Although it appears to be multi-storied from the outside, it is in reality a very high single story.

Aside from the testing building and its laboratory facilities, this 1920 facility is essentially a large pottery, with long open rooms filled with automatic and a few old forming wheels, giant kilns, misting areas, storage and shipping areas, and glazing machines. Large concrete elevators on the east boundary serve as storehouses for the clay used in making the ceramic insulators. Clay is brought into a large manufacturing shop adjacent to the elevators. This structure is a large one-story building with a saw-tooth roof which was designed to admit the maximum amount of natural light. This building contains machinery to mix (pug mill) and mold the large insulators. In 1920 it was built according to the latest principles of factory design. To the west and south of the molding shed is the kiln shed where the drying, glazing and firing takes place. Like most furnace structures this one has a steel frame covered with casement windows and metal siding. Large ventilators sit atop the low gable roof.

The office building of the complex fills the space between the testing building and the furnace shed. It is a low two-story structure of brick masonry construction with large vertical panels of windows which run from the ground level to the roof. These are now covered with mesh metal screens. The brick treatment of the intervening columns carries the same motif as the testing building although it was probably added later. The large window area indicated that the wall has little load-bearing function. The entire plant is one of the best of Baltimore's examples of early modern factory architecture.

8. Significance

Survey No. B-1039

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 type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
and/or

Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G

Level of Significance: national state local

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

Locke Insulators Inc., manufacturers of porcelain electrical insulators, have been innovators in the electrical industry since 1893. In addition to pioneering the first porcelain insulators, they invented and popularized many other varieties of insulators. Locke Insulators, which has been in Baltimore since 1920, is currently the largest supplier of electrical insulators in the country. The Baltimore complex is one of the city's best examples of early modern factory architecture, and one of city's few surviving examples of the Art Deco style.

In the 1890's, Fred M. Locke, a telegraph operator in New York State conceived the idea that insulators for telegraph lines could be made of a more efficient material than glass, which was then in use. After much experimentation, he produced the first wet process porcelain insulator, an efficient product which freed the then infant electrical industry from the limitations imposed by lack of a satisfactory insulating medium.

Locke opened his first porcelain insulator factory in Victor, New York in 1893. He designed new porcelain manufacture processes, many of which are still in use. The company was very successful, and when a branch plant was needed in 1920, Baltimore was found to be a suitable location. The decision to open the Baltimore factory proved fortuitous, as a large deposit of ball clay, an essential ingredient to the porcelain which previously had to be imported, was found nearby. This greatly cut costs. When the Victor plant was found to be in need of costly renovation in 1935, the entire operation was moved to Baltimore.

In 1936, Locke Insulators became a manufacturing affiliate of the General Electric Company, and by 1951, it was a department of the company. Today, Locke continues to produce many varieties of insulators which sell mostly to public utility companies.

1. SITE I.D. NO

B - 1039

HAER INVENTORY

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

2. INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION

Manufacture

3. PRIORITY

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

5. DATE

1920

6. GOVT SOURCE OF THREAT

OWNER

ADMIN

7. OWNER ADMIN

GENERAL ELECTRIC

8. NAME(S) OF STRUCTURE

Locke Insulators

9. OWNER'S ADDRESS

2525 Insulator Drive

10. STATE

M D

COUNTY NAME

CITY VICINITY

Baltimore

CONG

DIST

03

STATE

M D

COUNTY NAME

CITY VICINITY

BALTIMORE

CONG

DIST.

3

11. SITE ADDRESS (STREET & NO.)

2525 Insulator Drive

12. EXISTING SURVEYS

 NR NHL HABS HAER-I HAER NPS CL6
 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

UTM ZONE

EASTING

NORTHING

SIGN

SCALE

 1:24 1:62.5

QUAD NAME

15. CONDITION

70 EXCELLENT71 GOOD72 FAIR73 DETERIORATED74 RUINS75 UNEXPOSED76 ALTERED82 DESTROYED85 DEMOLISHED

16. INVENTORIED BY

LESLIE BARR

AFFILIATION

BALTIMORE MUSEUM OF INDUSTRY

DATE

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

SEE ATTACHED

(CONT OVER)

18. ORIGINAL USE

Manufacture

PRESENT USE

Same

ADAPTIVE USE

19. REFERENCES—HISTORICAL REFERENCES, PERSONAL CONTACTS, AND/OR OTHER

Baltimore magazine Dec. 1939

(CONT OVER)

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

21. NPS REGION

22. PUBLIC ACCESSIBILITY

 YES, LIMITED YES, UNLIMITED NO UNKNOWN

23. EDITOR

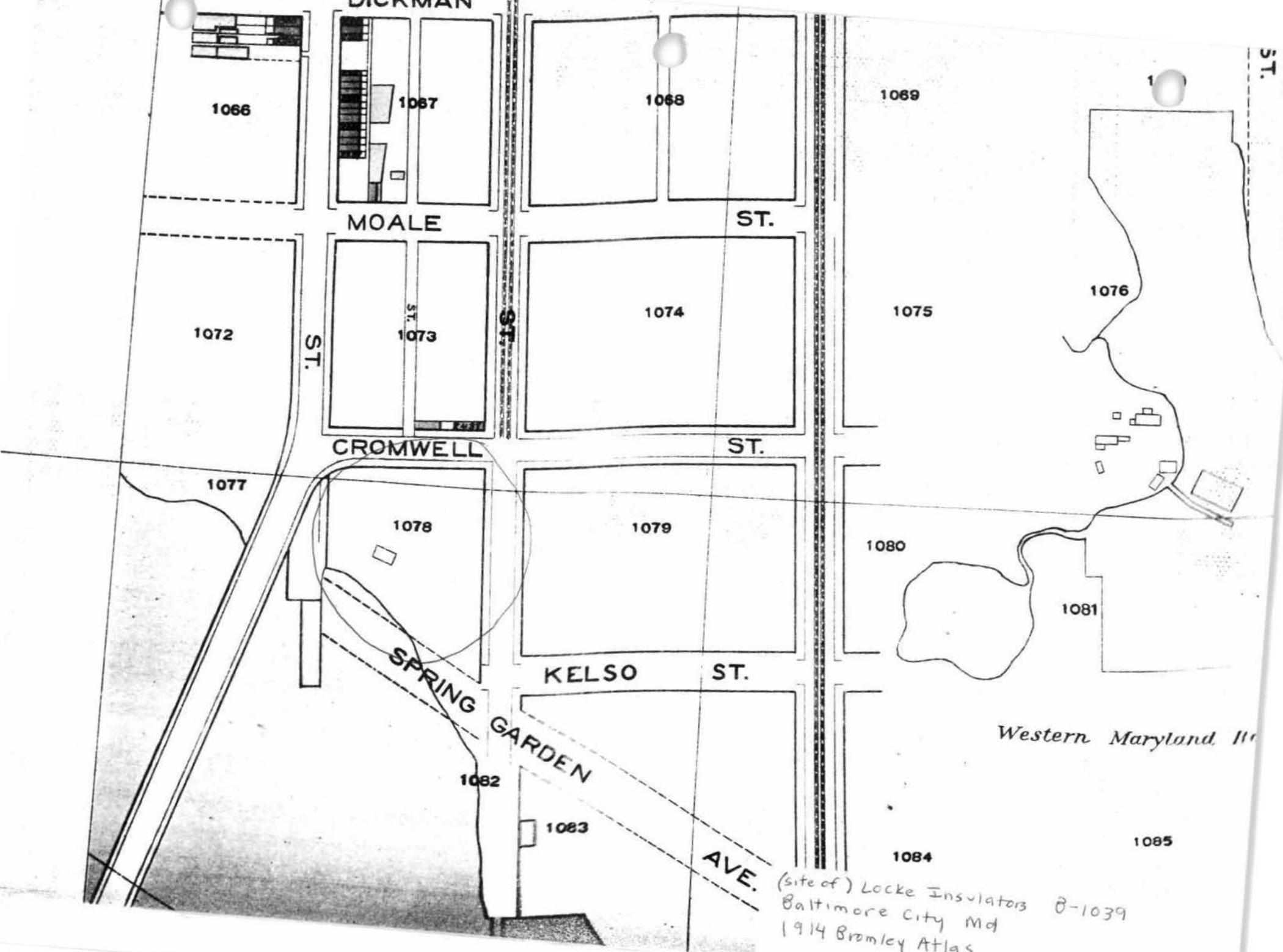
INDEXER

24. LOCATED IN AN HISTORIC DISTRICT?

 YES NO

NAME

DISTRICT I.D. NO.



(site of) Locke Insulators
 Baltimore City Md
 1914 Bromley Atlas

Western Maryland II

LOCKE INSULATORS



B-1039

Locke Insulators

Baltimore City, MD

Peter Liebhold, 5/83

Test Building - West Facade

INSULATORS B-1039

MORE CITY MD

LIEBHOLD 5/83

f Building - west facade

LOCKE INSULATORS



LOCKE INSULATORS B-1039

BALTIMORE CITY MD

PETER LIEBHOLD 5/83

West facade



LOCKE INSULATORS 8-1039

BALTIMORE CITY MD

PETER LIEBHOLD 5/83

Machine Shop - East facade



LOCKE INSULATORS B-1039

BALTIMORE CITY MD

PETER LIEBHOLD 5/83

Machine Shop - looking southwest



LOCKE INSULATORS 8-1039
BALTIMORE CITY MD
PETER LIEBHOLD 5/83

Clay storage elevators