

Statement of Significance

The canning industry was one of Baltimore's most important industries from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. The Gibbs Packing Company was one of the most active of Baltimore's canneries; and its 75 year history is representative of many of the city's packing establishments. This fine brick factory building was built by the company in 1883 and occupied by it until its closure in 1960s. It is significant as one of the few remaining cannery buildings in the Canton/Fells Point area, once the center of Baltimore's canning trade.

MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

INVENTORY FORM FOR STATE HISTORIC SITES SURVEY

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Gibbs Packing Company

AND/OR COMMON

Gibbs Cannery

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

2235 Boston Street

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Maryland

COUNTY

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Volunteers of America

Telephone #: (301) 675-4700

STREET & NUMBER

2235 Boston Street

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE, zip code  
Maryland, 21231

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Liber #: JFC 1149

Folio #: 365

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

None

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**7 DESCRIPTION**

B-988

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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 DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE
 

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The oldest portion of this complex is the two-story central section of seven by width. It is only about 20 feet deep and the floors are supported at midspan by a longitudinal heavy timber beams on wooden posts. Connected to it on the west is a building of later but similar construction. This structure is three stories in height but its axis is perpendicular to the former. The floors of this building are supported by two longitudinal beams on wooden posts and housed the canning equipment itself: vats, cookers, canners, labeling machines, etc.

The largest and most recent structure remaining is the four-story eastern portion whose rear addition contained the storage facilities of the cannery. This part has a brick facade and an interior of reinforced concrete.

The cleaning and peeling of tomatoes, vegetable and oysters was done in sheds which went out over the pier behind the main buildings. These were timber-framed buildings with wooden trusses, covered with corrugated metal or board-and-batten siding. These have now been demolished.

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

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 checked="" 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/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1883

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The canning industry was one of Baltimore's most important industries from the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. The Gibbs Packing Company was one of the most active of Baltimore's canneries, and its 75 year history is representative of many of the city's packing establishments. This fine brick factory building was built by the company in 1883 and occupied by it until its closure in 1960s. It is significant as one of the few remaining cannery buildings in the Canton/Fells Point area, once the center of Baltimore's canning trade.

Historical Significance

Baltimore became a major canning center in the 19th century due to its proximity to fruit and vegetable sources as well as Chesapeake Bay seafood, its excellent harbor and transportation systems, and a ready supply of labor.

The Gibbs Preserving Company building was built in 1883 by Major John Sears Gibbs--a native of Maine. Gibbs was already a major figure in the canning industry before he came to Baltimore. He had been a canned goods broker with offices in St. Louis and New Orleans before moving from St. Louis to Baltimore in order to set up his own cannery. Originally limited to the production of canned fruits, vegetables and oysters, in 1901 the company diversified its lines to include "La Belle" table syrup, a full line of jellies, jams and preserves, catsup, apple butter and peanut butter. The company also manufactured tin cans for its own use from around 1886 to 1901--after which they purchased cans from National, American and other local can manufacturers. In 1901 the Gibbs Company also set up the Gibbs Candy Company which produced a high grade of chocolate candies.

John Sears Gibbs was succeeded as president of the company in 1901 by his son, Rufus M. Gibbs. Later his second son, J. S.

Cont'd.--

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Query File: Enoch Pratt Free Library  
 Englehardt, George: Baltimore City, Maryland--The Book of Its Board  
 Interview of Dixon Gibbs of Trade, p. 92, Interior photo 1895

CONTINUE ON SEPARATE SHEET IF NECESSARY

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY \_\_\_\_\_

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE COUNTY

STATE COUNTY

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE

Ann E. Steele, Dennis Zembala

ORGANIZATION

Baltimore Industrial Museum

DATE

Sept. 1980

STREET & NUMBER

217 N. Charles Street

TELEPHONE

(301) 396-1931

CITY OR TOWN

Baltimore

STATE

MD 21201

The Maryland Historic Sites Inventory was officially created by an Act of the Maryland Legislature, to be found in the Annotated Code of Maryland, Article 41, Section 181 KA, 1974 Supplement.

The Survey and Inventory are being prepared for information and record purposes only and do not constitute any infringement of individual property rights.

RETURN TO: Maryland Historical Trust  
 The Shaw House, 21 State Circle  
 Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
 (301) 267-1438

Gibbs, Jr. became president, succeeded in 1949 by his son, William T. Dixon Gibbs, who held the post until the company was dissolved in

One of the most active of the Canton/Fells Point canneries, Gibbs Preserving absorbed the Booth Packing Company (1905) and the Webster-Butterfield Company (1925). From its earliest period to its demise Gibbs Preserving canned peaches, tomatoes and Chesapeake Bay Oysters and marketed them under the "Bull Head" brand (this brand was bought several years ago by a cannery in Biloxi, Mississippi which still uses the name and the design today). The company also canned pineapple--brought from the Bahamas on sailing vessels--until canned pineapples from Hawaii proved too competitive.

Gibbs Preserving provided canned goods to the governments of the United States, Canada, France and Britain during World War I and World War II. During the latter, Army and Navy volunteer personnel--and later German prisoners of war from nearby camps--were used to bolster the workforce. "Due to high turnover and absenteeism, the company frequently was compelled to carry as many as 4,000-5,000 employees on the payroll in order to maintain a force of 1,500 during peak summer operations." With its specially designed dehydrating equipment, Gibbs and Company supplied over one million pounds of dehydrated potatoes during the war. Many of these war provisions went out in camouflaged cans, painted by the company.

Gibbs and Company also cooperated with the federal government during the Depression, installing a special meat canning department for processing government-purchased surplus livestock into public assistance provisions.

In 1954 Gibbs Preserving Company was acquired by the Consolidated Foods Corporation. At that time the company was packing over 1,500,000 cases of canned foods annually, with a large proportion of the raw foods which went into the 35 varieties they produced being raised under company supervision on farms around the country.

In            Consolidated decided to move its packing operation in Baltimore to the Eastern Shore--a fate which befell many of Baltimore's other canning houses. The building was emptied of its equipment and sold in            to the Volunteers of America, which continues to use it today as a warehouse for thrift shop goods and a shelter for homeless itinerant men.

1. SITE I.D. NO.

B - 9 8 8

## NAER INVENTORY

U.S. Department of Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service2. INDUSTRIAL CLASSIFICATION  
Manufacturing

3. PRIORITY

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

5. DATE

6. GOVT SOURCE OF THREAT

OWNER

ADMIN

7. OWNER/ADMIN

Volunteers of America

8. NAME(S) OF STRUCTURE

Gibbs Packing Company

9. OWNER'S ADDRESS

2235 Boston Street

10. STATE COUNTY M D COUNTY NAME

CITY/VICINITY  
Baltimore

CONG. DIST. 3

STATE COUNTY M D COUNTY NAME

CITY/VICINITY

Baltimore

CONG. DIST. 3

11. SITE ADDRESS (STREET &amp; NO)

2235 Boston Street

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

1 8 3 6 3 4 1 0 4 3 4 9 0 6 0

SCALE  1:24  1:62.5 OTHER QUAD NAME Baltimore East

UTM ZONE EASTING NORTHING SIGN

SCALE  1:24  1:62.5 OTHER QUAD NAME15. CONDITION 70  EXCELLENT 71  GOOD 72  FAIR 73  DETERIORATED 74  RUINS 75  UNEXPOSED 76  ALTERED 77  DESTROYED 85  DEMOLISHED

16. INVENTORIED BY

Ann Steele

AFFILIATION

Baltimore Industrial Museum

DATE

Sept., 1980

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

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(CONT OVER)

18. ORIGINAL USE

Oyster and vegetable cannery

PRESENT USE

Residential and storage

ADAPTIVE USE

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

Query File: Enoch Pratt Free Library

Interview of W. Dixon Gibbs, retired President of Gibbs Company

(CONT OVER)

20. URBAN AREA 50,000 POP. OR MORE?

 YES  NO

21.

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.



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Gibbs Packing Company 5.5

1895 photo, taken from  
G. Englehardt, Baltimore City  
Maryland, p. 92.



Interior View of the Gibbs Preserving Company's Oyster Packery.

produce, \$7,440,000; cotton goods, \$8,000,000; dry goods and notions, \$12,500,000; drugs, \$3,750,000; groceries, \$25,000,000 and metals, \$28,000,000; liquors (including beer), \$14,800,000; leather, \$7,850,000; live stock, nearly \$7,000,000; provisions, \$1,000,000; lumber, \$9,000,000; oils, paints, and naval stores, etc., \$12,000,000; tobacco, leaf, manufactured, and jobbing, \$31.4 million; grain and flour, \$30,000,000; cotton (the staple), \$15,000,000. These figures are significant of the remarkable extent and importance of the city's commerce.

and West Virginia.  
with about 2,000,000  
East and South by  
ties of bunker coal  
lignite from Penn-

cent statement as  
being hardwood ex-  
pine right out of  
age in respect of its  
ign exports of 1894  
figure.

Annually. Annu-  
; there are several  
Over 65,000 hogs-  
p is 20,000 to 30,000

more than \$1,000,000  
g toward the million  
nitrate, and caustic  
ed \$2,000,000, and of  
d upwards in value.  
port to supply the

nal jobbing business,  
to illustrate the ex-  
tending, \$20,000,000 ;





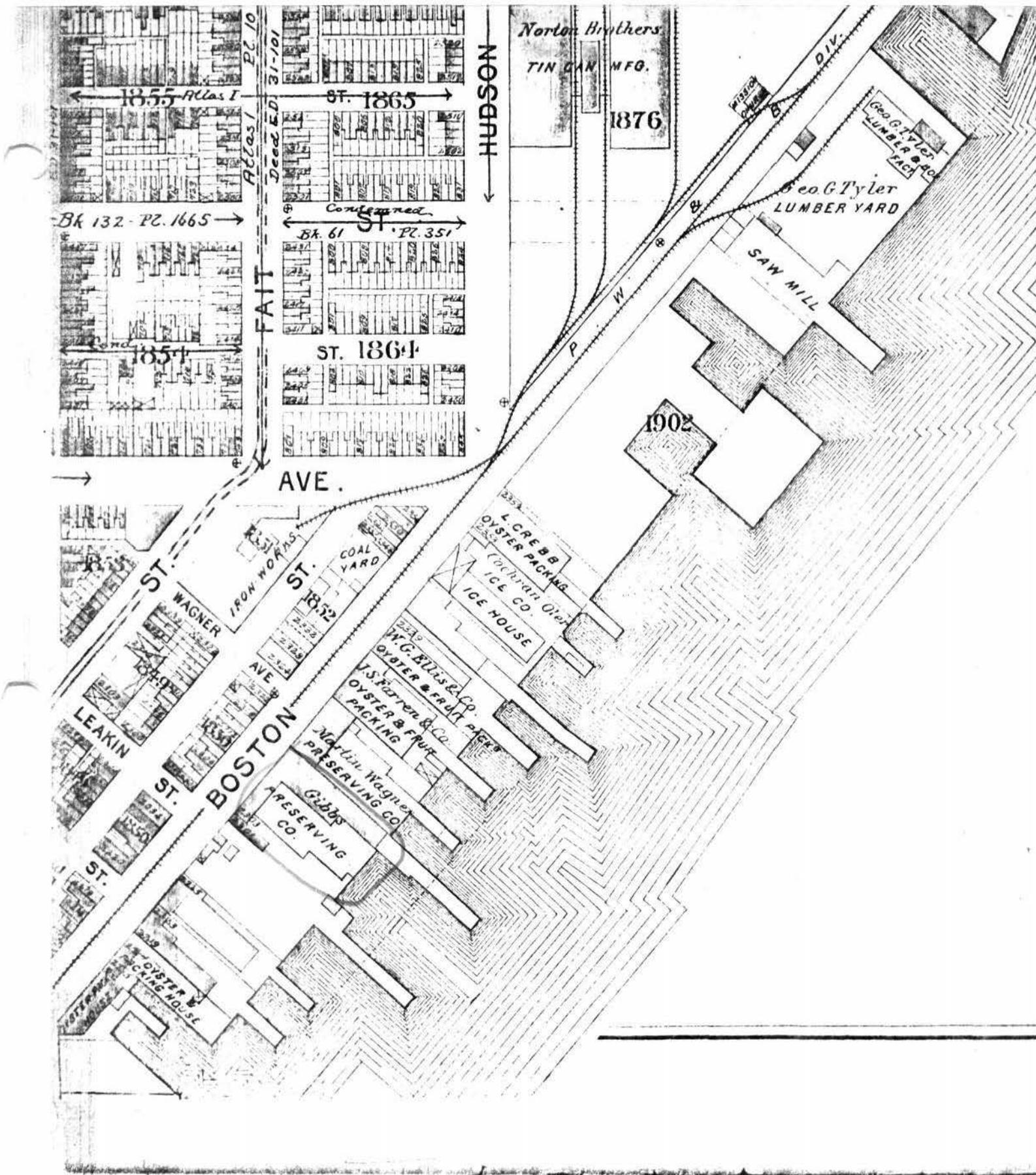
BALTIMORE

18° 63' 41.0" 49° 06'  
GIBBS  
NORTHWEST  
PACKING CO.

GIBBS PACKING CO.  
BALTIMORE MD  
S.A.S 7.5" BALTIMORE EAST  
QUAD  
18° 63' 41.0" 49° 06'

B-988

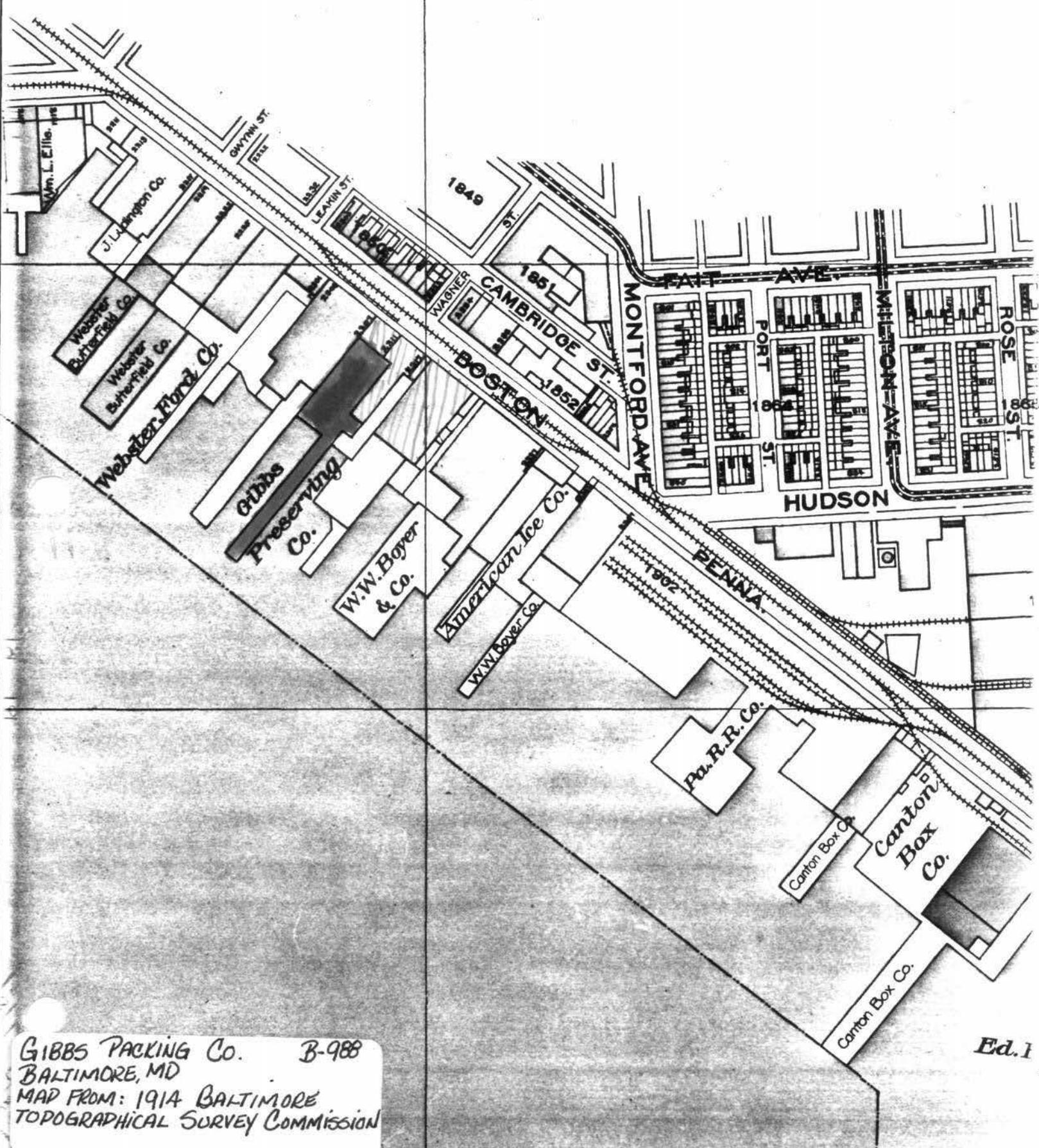
PATAPSCO RIVER



GIBBS PRESERVING CO. B-988  
 BALTIMORE CITY, MD  
 MAP FROM: 1896 BROMLEY  
 ATLAS

9,000' EAST.

10,000'



GIBBS PACKING Co. B-988  
 BALTIMORE, MD  
 MAP FROM: 1914 BALTIMORE  
 TOPOGRAPHICAL SURVEY COMMISSION

Ed. 1

Gibbs Preserving Co.

1914 MAP

Topographical Survey Commission





Gibbs Preserving Co. 8-988  
Baltimore City, MD  
photo: Ann Steele  
neg. loc. MD. Historic Trust  
Boston Street facade (norm),  
DEC. 1980 looking S/E



Gibbs Preserving Co. B-988  
Baltimore City, MD  
photo: Ann Steele  
neg. loc. MD. Historic Trust  
Boston Street facade, looking  
Dec. 1980 S/W



**VOLUNTEERS OF AMERICA**

Gibbs Preserving Co. 6-988  
Baltimore City, MD  
photo: Ann Steele  
reg. loc.: MD. Historic Trust  
West end of North (Boston  
Dec. 1980 St.) facade