

Wisconsin Word Processing Format (Approved 1/92)

**United States Department of Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900A). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
other names/site number Gold Medal Folding Furniture Company

2. Location

street & number	1700-1701 Packard Avenue	N/A	not for publication
city or town	Racine	N/A	vicinity
state Wisconsin	code WI	county Racine	code 101
			zip code 53403

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination
 _ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of
 Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property
X meets _ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant _ nationally
 _ statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Office - Wisconsin
 State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property _ meets _ does not meet the National Register criteria.
 (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 Signature of commenting official/Title Date

 State or Federal agency and bureau

Name of Property

County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

 entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet. determined eligible for the

National Register.

 See continuation sheet. determined not eligible for the

National Register.

 See continuation sheet. removed from the National

Register.

 other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification**Ownership of Property**
(check as many boxes as
as apply) private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal**Category of Property**
(Check only one box) building(s)
 district
 structure
 site
 object**Number of Resources within Property**
(Do not include previously listed resources
in the count)

contributing	noncontributing
2	0 buildings sites
	1 structures objects
2	0 total

Name of related multiple property listing:(Enter "N/A" if property not part of a multiple property
listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources**previously listed in the National Register**

0

6. Function or Use**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION: manufacturing
facility**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION:
manufacturing facility**7. Description****Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th and Early 20th CENTURY AMERICAN
MOVEMENTS**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone, Concrete
walls Brick
Stone
roof Asphalt
other Metal**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for the National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Industry

Period of Significance

1905-1969

Significant Dates

1905, 1909, 1912, 1914, 1916, 1917, 1924

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Davis, David R.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
Name of Property

Racine
County and State

Wisconsin

9. Major Bibliographic References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous Documentation on File (National Park Service):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
 - Other State Agency
 - Federal Agency
 - Local government
 - University
 - Other
- Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.3 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16T 434442.37 4729000.90
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

See Continuation Sheet

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title:	Matt Wicklund	date	August 20, 2018
Organization:	MacRostie Historic Advisors	telephone	312-786-1700
street & number	53 West Jackson Boulevard, Suite 1142	zip code	60604
city or town	Chicago	state	IL

Name of Property

County and State

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name/title	Joshua Jeffers	date	August 20, 2018
organization	J. Jeffers & Co, LLC	telephone	
street & number	225 East Michigan Street, #200	zip code	53202-4900
city or town	Milwaukee	state	WI

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects, (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

Summary

The Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company is located at 1700-1701 Packard Avenue in the Uptown, also known as the Junction, neighborhood on the east side of Racine, Wisconsin. The nominated property is comprised of two contributing buildings, an administration building on the west side of Packard Avenue and a factory building consisting of five sections located on the east side of Packard Avenue. The administration building and factory building are connected by a historic-period metal bridge. The nominated property is bounded on the north by 17th Street, on the east by Memorial Drive, on the south by a vacated railroad right-of-way, and on the west by a fifty-foot setback from the west elevation of the administration building, spanning from the former railroad right-of-way north to 17th Street. Packard Avenue, oriented north-south, terminates at the vacated east-west oriented former railroad right-of-way. The factory building is constructed up to the lot line along 17th Street and Memorial Drive. The north facade of the administration building is set back approximately seventy feet from 17th Street.

The factory building is organized into five, two-and-three-story brick sections built between 1905 and 1924. The administration building was constructed in 1909. In 1912, the Gold Medal Company constructed an elevated steel walkway connecting the factory building to the administration building.

The area immediately surrounding the Gold Medal buildings consists primarily of industrial and commercial development, which follows the railroad track located to the east of the nominated property and extends along major streets. Several large manufacturing sites remain to the east and northeast of the nominated property, including the former Racine Wagon & Carriage Company complex (Racine-Sattley Co.), the Walker Manufacturing Co.-Ajax Plant (National Register #16000519), and the S. C. Johnson & Son complex. To the south is an unimproved redevelopment site that was formerly the location of the Mitchell-Lewis Motor Company factory. Residential blocks lined by one-to-two story frame houses are located immediately north of the Gold Medal buildings.

Site and Setting

Constructed over a period between 1905 and 1924, the Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company is comprised of an administration building and a factory building, consisting of five sections, that were expanded and built over time to meet the needs of the company. This historical expansion is clearly expressed on the exterior, giving the factory a distinctive presence and appearance in the neighborhood.

The factory building has a wide rectangular footprint, completely filling the land bounded by Packard Avenue to the east, 17th Street to the north, Memorial Drive to the east, and the vacated former railroad right-of-way to the south. The center portion of the factory is bisected by an east-west oriented private

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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

alley with brick pavers, closed off by doors at either end and covered in places by elevated brick passageways connecting sections of the factory.

The administration building was constructed in 1909 to the west of the factory building, on the west side of Packard Avenue. The second floor of the administration building and the second floor of the 1905 section of the factory building are connected by a wood and metal bridge constructed by the Gold Medal company in 1912. The steel bridge is comprised of a pair of Fink-type trusses with wood decking. Five-foot portions at each end of the bridge are partially enclosed with corrugated metal walls and roofing to shelter the twin wood doorways that access the bridge from either building.

The administration building has a rectangular footprint and is situated at the northwest corner of the termination of Packard Avenue at the vacated former railroad right-of-way. A flat grass lawn abuts the west facade of the administration building. To the north of the administration building is a small gravel vehicular parking area bound by a non-historic chain link fence. Historically, the gravel area served as a lumberyard with supplies stored on wooden racks. The Gold Medal company replaced the lumberyard with unpaved automobile parking in 1958.

The Gold Medal property is located approximately 1.6 miles southwest of historic downtown Racine. To the north of the property across 17th Street are residential blocks lined by one-to-two-story frame houses. Industrial properties are located to the east and west of Gold Medal. To the south, across 18th Street, is a rectangular grass field with a small portion of paved vehicular parking. This unimproved redevelopment land was formerly the location of the Mitchell-Lewis Motor Company factory. A north-south oriented railway is located one block east of the Gold Medal property. The railway is lined with industrial properties and several large manufacturing sites, including the former Racine Wagon & Carriage Company complex (Racine-Sattley Co.), the Walker Manufacturing Co.-Ajax Plant (National Register #16000519), and the S. C. Johnson & Son complex.

Factory Building, 1905-1924 - Exterior

Constructed between 1905 and 1924, Gold Medal's factory building is composed of multiple sections that have been expanded and built over time to meet the needs of the company. This development is clearly expressed at its exterior facades.

Overall, the factory building forms a wide rectangular footprint. All sections are composed of masonry, primarily Milwaukee cream brick, with stone or concrete foundations. Most facades are divided into bays, which are slightly recessed and divided by brick piers that extend from the water table to the parapet. The buildings range in height from one- to three-stories above grade, and some have full basements. Flat roofs are enclosed by masonry parapets and clad in roofing membranes (now in deteriorated condition). Window openings have segmental or flat arches with limestone sills, and are

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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
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regularly distributed on all elevations. Most door and window openings retain original wood, panel doors or divided-light, wood, double-hung windows.

West Facade

The west facade of the factory faces Packard Avenue. This facade is comprised of two sections connected at the second story by a brick hyphen spanning above an entrance to the block's private alley. The two-story southern section was completed in 1905, while the three-story northern section was built in 1916.

The 1905 section was the first substantial brick factory built by Gold Medal. It is regularly fenestrated with eleven window bays on its first and second stories. Although most windows remain boarded, original six-over-six, double-hung, wood windows can still be seen. A main entrance to the section is located in the third window bay from the north and is set perpendicular to the facade in a deeply-recessed arched opening. The steel truss bridge from the administration building connects at the far southern end of the second story. Between the first and second story is a faded banner sign, painted in bright orange-gold paint, which reads: GOLD MEDAL CAMP FURNITURE MFG CO.

The 1916 section is the west facade of a three-story, cream brick-clad addition. It is divided into four structural bays; each is evenly fenestrated at each story with two segmented-arch window openings with limestone sills. The historic windows are steel-framed, with a fixed, lower, eight-pane sash; an operable, pivoting, middle sash with eight panes; and a fixed, arched, four-pane transom. A deeply-recessed entrance with a flight of limestone steps is located in the southern bay. All basement windows are infilled with non-historic glass block.

A short brick-clad hyphen spans between the 1905 and 1916 sections at the second story. It features two steel-framed windows that match the windows in the 1916 section. The opening below the hyphen contains a non-historic overhead vehicular door that leads to the central private alley.

North Facade

The north facade of the factory building faces 17th Street. This facade is composed of two sections completed in 1916 (western half) and 1917 (eastern half). The separation between the two sections is barely discernable but there is a very subtle step in the roofline. Both sections are evenly fenestrated with segmental-arch windows steel-framed, with a fixed, lower, eight-pane sash; an operable, pivoting, middle sash with eight panes; and a fixed, arched, four-pane transom. There is no parapet; instead the wall is capped by a plain metal gutter, which feeds three metal downspouts. Twin original iron fire escapes are attached to the wall of each section.

The 1916 section has 13 windows per floor and features an original wood double doorway at the east end of the second story. Below this doorway at the ground floor level is a later, frame, projecting shed

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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

on a concrete dock, which conceals a former entrance. The eastern half of the north facade was completed in 1917 and has eighteen evenly-spaced windows per floor. At the second story, the eighth bay from the east contains a historic wood paneled fire exit door.

East Facade

The east facade of the factory faces Memorial Drive, formerly called Hamilton Avenue. It is divided into two sections, which are separated by a single-story entrance to the building's central private alley. The north half is the three-story 1917 section, and the south half is a single-story south boiler house section completed in 1914.

The north section is divided into five bays, with a wide middle bay having three windows per floor, two narrow flanking bays with single windows, and outer bays also with single windows. All windows are steel-framed, with a fixed, lower, eight-pane sash; an operable, pivoting, middle sash with eight panes; and a fixed, arched, four-pane transom. All second-floor windows are similar to other steel-framed windows, except they have a recessed brick panel in place of a fixed lower sash. The basement-level windows are infilled with four small non-historic vent openings. A doorway with a historic wood panel single-leaf door, covered with a metal grill, occupies the north bay of the ground story.

The southern boiler house section was completed in 1914 to supply heat and power to the factory. It is six bays wide with a chimney rising from the southern bay. Each bay is topped by corbeled brick dentils, with a metal gutter above. All windows are steel-framed, multi-paned, hopper-type windows, with rounded arch tops; each has a central, operable, pivoting sash. The chimney has a square pedestal, which rises above the roofline and tapers to form a round base; interconnecting, hollow terra cotta blocks form a tapered, round chimney, which was partially demolished after 2013. The northern bay features a single arched opening with a large steel-framed window. The next two bays to the south are plain, with a single oval vent at the base of one. The second bay from the south is wide and contains two large, arched windows, which flank a single doorway with a tall arched transom. The doorway contains an original wood door with bead board panels and stiles in an X-pattern. Above, the metal-framed transom matches the flanking windows.

Connecting the 1917 section with the 1914 boiler house is a single-story brick wall with an original wood sliding door. The wall matches the boiler house in scale and design. The wood sliding door is hung from a metal track affixed to the face of the elevation, and opens onto the private alley. The door is divided into three sections, both vertically and horizontally, with bead board panels on the top and bottom rows featuring stiles in an X-pattern, and a middle row with plywood panels covering former glazed openings.

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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

South Facade

The south facade is divided into three sections: the east 1914 boiler house, a middle 1924 section, and the west 1905 section. The east 1914 power section has two blind bays on this elevation and matches the design of its east elevation. The three-story middle 1924 section is regularly fenestrated and 15 window bays wide. The elevation is capped with clay copping tiles. A recessed corner at the west end of the ground story reveals the original clipped corner wall of the 1905 section. Window openings have limestone sills and contain metal-framed windows with operable pivoting middle sashes. Windows at the ground story are five panes wide by six panes tall, while upper-floor windows are only five panes tall. The south facade of the 1905 section matches its west side both in design and fenestration, but does not have a raised parapet wall. A painted banner sign between the first and second stories on the west side repeats on the south. All windows have two-over-two, double-hung windows; all ground-story windows are boarded. A single large opening, roughly centered, opens onto a modern concrete loading dock.

Factory Building, 1905-1924 – Interior

The interior of the factory consists of a series of spaces connected by masonry door openings and passages, some of which are sealed by historic sliding metal fire doors. The manufacturing sections of the building are large open spaces with concrete floors on the ground floor and hardwood tongue and groove floors on upper floors, exposed brick walls, exposed wood or steel columns, and visible roof framing. All floors are largely vacant and open, interrupted only by rows of evenly-spaced wood or metal columns. Pipes, conduit, and other systems are exposed and attached to wall faces and to ceilings. The building contains four wood stairwells and four freight elevators, all of which are industrial in character.

Administration Building, 1909 – Exterior

The administration building is a three-story cream brick building of mill-type construction, with a stone foundation and a flat roof. The building is seven bays wide and five bays deep, with the primary facade facing east onto Packard Avenue.

The east primary façade is evenly fenestrated and is visually divided into a ground floor, which is of red pressed brick, and upper floors, which are of cream brick. The ground floor has two-over-two, double-hung, wood windows in rectangular openings with limestone lintels. Windows in sets of two punctuate the outer bays, while the middle bays have twin, individual windows. The main entrance is set in the third bay from the north, and has a limestone lintel, which originally had raised metal letters that read: Office. A flight of six limestone steps ascend to a recessed doorway. The ground story elevation is capped by a limestone cornice. The upper stories have fenestration similar to the ground story, with the exception for single windows in the outer bays. All upper-story window openings have

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six-over-six, wood, double-hung windows; some windows are boarded. An unenclosed, steel truss bridge connects to the building at the second floor in the second bay from the south.

The north and south facades are similar, each having five structural bays. Each has a narrow middle bay, with a single window per story, flanked by bays with two windows per story. All window openings have two-over-two, wood, double-hung windows. The south facade has a small, non-historic, wood loading dock built in the second bay from the west. A steel fire door closes an opening to the dock in the building. On the north elevation, a single doorway in the narrow middle bay opens onto the former company lumber yard, currently used as a gravel parking area.

The west facade is flat, without the variation created by recessed bays. It is evenly fenestrated with five two-over-two windows per floor.

Administration Building, 1909 – Interior

The basement occupies only the northeastern sixth of the building's footprint. Concrete floors and exposed foundation walls define the space. The central stair leads to a north-south corridor with several small storage rooms and a mechanical room at the northern end. One of the smaller rooms is a safe with thick masonry walls and a substantial metal door. Historic wood panel doors with wood casing and trim connect the corridor and rooms.

The first floor of the administration building contains a combination of finished office spaces at the northeast corner of the floor, and more open space at its south and west ends. The east entry opens into a small reception area with non-historic wood paneled walls, carpeting, and dropped ceilings. Two doorways at the west end of this reception area, opposite the main entrance, open to an enclosed staircase to the upper floors and a separate basement staircase. East of this reception area are a suite of offices arranged around an open conference area. These offices feature carpeted floors, painted wood trim, and an exposed decorative pressed-metal ceiling that has been painted black. A safe with a heavy metal door is located along the north wall of the open conference area; the name "Gold Medal Camp Furniture Mfg." is painted in gold above the door. South of the wood-paneled reception room is an open area with wood floors, painted pressed-metal ceiling, and square structural columns. Sections at the periphery of this space have been divided into smaller rooms. The west end of the first floor is open industrial space, with wood floors, exposed brick exterior walls, and exposed structural beams and columns.

The second and third floors of the administration building are open industrial spaces, with tongue and groove wood floors, exposed brick exterior walls, and exposed structural beams and columns. Both upper levels and the basement are accessed by an enclosed wood staircase at the center of the building.

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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

Integrity

The Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company's administration building (1909) and factory (1905, 1914, 1916, 1917, 1924) retain integrity from their periods of construction. Together, the two buildings form the manufacturing and administrative operations of the Gold Medal Company.

The 1924 three-story brick portion of the factory replaced a 1902 two-story frame building on the site. Gold Medal decided to replace the 1902 frame factory with the 1924 brick factory to enhance its ability to produce more of its products in response to increased demand. This construction simply illustrates the evolution of the subject building.

The Gold Medal Company constructed two purpose-built frame factory buildings in 1894 on the east side of Hamilton Avenue (currently named Memorial Drive), on lots that are across the street from the nominated property. Sanborn maps from early in the period of significance show these buildings as secondary support spaces; in fact one was vacant and the other was used as a warehouse. As the Gold Medal Company continued to build brick factory portions on the nominated site, the 1894 frame buildings continued in their secondary role, and by 1937 (during the period of significance) the two frame buildings were demolished. The demolition of the 1894 frame buildings do not hinder the integrity of the nominated Gold Medal property, because they served secondary roles in the function of the company during the period of significance (1905-1968) and had no manufacturing functions.

Overall, the nominated property is largely intact and appears as it did historically when occupied by the Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company. All major additions and many smaller changes were completed while Gold Medal occupied the site. Non-historic alterations are limited to a few instances of window and door replacement or boarding; however, most historic openings remain, and historic wood and most steel windows exist. Few exterior masonry openings have been expanded or changed in size or proportion; most noticeable are changes to basement openings. The complex retains historic integrity and clearly conveys its historic appearance as a manufacturing building that has developed over time. The boiler house chimney was shortened to its present height sometime around 2013.

The buildings overall are in good condition. There are a few sections with spalling masonry, limited to the power house. Interior materials such as plaster, wood floors, bead board wainscoting, tin ceilings, and wood trim appear to also be in good condition. Despite some deterioration, the historic materials throughout the Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company remain intact and the building continues to display the features that make it a significant early-twentieth century factory.

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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

Summary of Significance

The Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company building, or Gold Medal, is locally significant under National Register Criterion A in the area of Industry for its association with the Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company, a local manufacturer that became a nationwide leader in the design and production of a range of portable folding and collapsible furniture. Their products were originally designed to meet the demands of sportsmen and adventurers exploring the wilderness, but the United States Government adopted several of their products for their design and durability, and made them standards for design. Gold Medal's Racine building served as the headquarters of the company and the facility where nearly all furniture lines were designed, produced, and shipped. Gold Medal remained a significant Racine furniture manufacturing concern for nearly a century until it closed in 1986. The Gold Medal building remains as the only production facility in Racine associated with the Gold Medal Company yet is the property associated with the company's rise to prominence and continued success resulting in expansion, and represents Racine's role in a specialized segment of Wisconsin's furniture industry.

Period of Significance

The nominated property consists of two contributing buildings, both constructed for the Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company: an administration building (1909) and the factory (1905-1924) which was constructed over time to house the company's manufacturing facilities and boiler house. The period of significance for the Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company property extends from 1905 to 1969, covering the period between the construction of the factory's oldest portion to the fifty-year end date. The building overall retains excellent integrity and continues to convey its historic appearance as a manufacturing building that has developed over time. All major alterations and additions were made during Gold Medal's occupancy.

History of the Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company

The Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company was begun in 1890 by Robert B. Lang, who was born in Canada in 1845 and immigrated to the United States in 1862. Lang invented several pieces of folding furniture in Toronto, Canada using a special hinge design patented by Canadian Pierre Latour in 1882.¹ Using Latour's patented hinge design, Lang was able to build a more durable type of folding furniture for camping, especially a sleeping cot. After patenting his furniture designs in the United States, Lang came to Racine and opened his shop in a frame building built by manufacturer James T. Tostevin at the southeast corner of 13th and Clark Streets (demolished). Tostevin manufactured fanning mills in the

¹ Pierre Latour, *Improvements on Folding Joints for Camp Furniture*. (Perfectionnements aux joints des meubles pliants.) Patent CA 15694, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada. October 25, 1882; Latour's folding hinge was patented in the United States in 1884.

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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

building during the 1880s and, with his knowledge of machinery, designed machines to manufacture Lang's folding furniture, especially cots.²

Lang's series of light-weight, folding and collapsible outdoor furniture pieces were designed to be inexpensive and portable enough to appeal to a wide market, and to be easily carried into the field. The folding furniture was advertised in journals, magazines, and books on camping, and was marketed to sportsmen, fishermen, and adventurers seeking the idealized late-19th century experience of being outdoors in nature. Prior to the American Civil War, camping was simply an adjunct activity to hunting or fishing, but by the 1880s, it was quickly becoming its own form of recreation. As more Americans became interested in exploring the wilderness and the new National Parks, demand for lightweight and affordable camping furniture increased.

Lang was not alone in the camping equipment market. Several mattress, cot, and chair manufacturers already existed, but Lang developed a range of products that could be sold individually or as a complete camping package. Lang's 1890 advertisement claimed, "the camp-bed, table, and chair may be carried in a flour-sack – You can find none so light, so strong, or so portable."³ Sportsman and outdoor writer George O. Shields agreed and referred his readers to Lang's products:

Good cot beds are now made for camp use that fold up into a small package, are light, but strong and durable. One of the best I have ever seen is that made by R. B. Lang, of Racine, Wis. I dislike to indulge in free advertising, but deem it my duty to state, in such a work as this, where desirable articles may be had.⁴

Within the first year, Lang exclaimed in his advertisements that his folding camp furniture had been awarded 14 gold medals and diplomas, hence his product's name: Gold Medal Camp Furniture. As demand increased for Gold Medal Camp Furniture, Lang acquired the building on 13th Street in order to expand production.

With continued success, in 1892 Lang sold equal shares of Gold Medal to two investors and incorporated the firm as the Gold Medal Camp Furniture & Novelty Manufacturing Company. Lang remained company president, while William George Gittings became Vice President and John George Teall became Secretary. Teall, like Lang, was born in Canada in 1846 and immigrated to the US in 1858. Gittings was born in 1858 and was raised on his family's 140-acre farm in Caledonia. Gittings'

² "Three Racine Industries Cradled in Same Building on South Side," *Racine Review*, March 1, 1929. Racine Heritage Museum.

³ George O. Shields, *Camping and Camp Outfits. A Manual of Instruction for Young and Old Sportsmen* (Chicago: Rand, McNally & Company, Publishers, 1890) Advertisement section.

⁴ Shields, 32-33.

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father emigrated from Wales in 1840 and was an early settler of the Wisconsin Territory and the newly established County of Racine when he arrived in the area in 1855. William G. Gittings served as the superintendent of Racine County Schools from 1882 until 1889, when he moved to Racine to become the city's assistant postmaster; it was in this position that he became acquainted with Gold Medal. Gittings became the sole owner of Gold Medal in 1893, buying out both Lang and Teall.⁵ That same year, Gold Medal presented its products at the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and won that exposition's gold medal, which Gold Medal later claimed was its namesake.

William G. Gittings relocated the company in 1894 to the current site along 17th Street and built a frame two-story factory building on the east side of Hamilton Avenue (currently Memorial Drive). Fourteen workers (11 male, 3 female) were employed to accommodate the growing demand for Gold Medal products.⁶ The site was ideal because of its position adjacent to the main line of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad.

Demand for Gold Medal products doubled by 1897, and in 1898 philanthropist Helen Miller Gould purchased 50,000 Gold Medal cots as part of a greater \$100,000 donation to the US Government in support of the Spanish-American War.⁷ The cots were well received in the battlefields of Cuba and the Philippines. The United States military, recognizing the need and usefulness of the cots, ordered over 100,000 more, in addition to folding tables and chairs. In order to build the furniture, William G. Gittings doubled the size of his factory by building another frame factory to the north.

At the time it was determined that cots were superior to sleeping on the ground because soldiers could avoid resting in wet mud and therefore reduced the chances of contracting mosquito-borne malaria. In 1899, a soldier in Company L of the United States Infantry in the Philippines wrote of his enjoyment of his new cot to an unknown female worker at the Gold Medal factory:

The rainy season is now over and the dry and hot weather is commencing. During the wet season, which lasts from August to November, we have, many a time, slept in water and rain, with nothing but the stars in the heavens and lone sentries here and there, to protect us through the lonely hours of night. From the effect of exposure at one time fifty men were on the sick list... Write and tell me what part of the cots you work on. I

⁵ *History of the Golden Jubilee Class of the Wisconsin Consistory* (Milwaukee: Scottish Rite Cathedral, 1913) 106; Robert B. Lang later founded his own hardware company, the R. B. Lang Manufacturing Co., at Holborn and 18th Streets. The company and its holdings were bought at an assignee's sale by Gold Medal in 1928. *Iron Age*, 1928. 453.

⁶ *Sixth Biennial Report of the Commissioner of Labor, Census and Industrial Statistics of Wisconsin, 1893-1894* (Madison: Democrat Printing Company, State Printer, 1894) 138a.

⁷ "Beds for Uncle Sam," *The Weekly Wisconsin*, December 31, 1898. 2; "Local Man Talks to Rotary Club," *Racine Journal-News*, September 25, 1918. 10.

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must say it is easy to lay on them after lying on the ground for four months, and it is almost like a feather bed to me after sleeping on nothing but old mother earth for such a long time.⁸

The US Government adopted the Gold Medal cot as the standard cot design and continued to purchase goods directly from the company. All other firms that wanted to supply the government with cots had to conform to the Gold Medal design standard.⁹ During the 1900s, Gold Medal supplied the US Army with over 150,000 cots, and produced cots with special mosquito netting for the Medical Department of the US Army. The company expanded in 1902 to 50 workers, and built a second two-story, frame factory on the west side of Hamilton Avenue (Memorial Drive). Continued demand resulted three years later in the doubling of the workforce and the construction of a large brick facility, which extended the company across a full block to Packard Avenue.¹⁰ These new facilities allowed Gold Medal to supply the US Government with a variety of products prior to the US's involvement in World War I. Gold Medal produced cots, folding chairs, tables, stools, and even bathtubs for the US Army and Navy, all of which were adopted as standards.¹¹ Cots and other furnishings were also supplied to many state camps operated by the National Guard.

The US Government's extensive use of Gold Medal products, beginning during the Spanish-American War, constituted a great endorsement of the company's products, which directly influenced its domestic and international sales. Domestic sales increased as returning soldiers sought to experience camping in the US wilderness. Having appreciated Gold Medal products on the field during the war, veterans wanted the same products and drove new demand for cots and camping equipment. In order to gain notoriety, in 1909 Gold Medal sent a complete set of equipment for veteran and former president Teddy Roosevelt to use on one of his expeditions in Africa. Although Roosevelt initially refused any offers of equipment, later publicity photos clearly show the adventurer and his entourage reclining in Gold Medal "campaign chairs" and using folding tables and other pieces.¹²

⁸ "Cot Conveys Letter to the Philippines," *Racine Daily Journal*, February 15, 1900; According to the article and subsequent pieces, a factory worker at Gold Medal attached a letter signed with a fictitious name to a finished cot. The letter was not noticed until it was opened by a United States Infantryman in 1899.

⁹ "Gold medal Camp Furniture Manufacturing Co." *The Business Philosopher*, June 1914. 424.

¹⁰ "Racine Plant to Double Capacity," *Racine Daily Journal*, November 11, 1905.

¹¹ "Gold medal Camp Furniture Manufacturing Co."

¹² "Racine Stools for Teddy," *Wausau Daily Record-Herald*, March 8, 1909. 1; "Campaign chairs" or "Fenby Chairs" were first designed by British engineer and inventor Joseph Beverly Fenby, who patented the design in 1877 in England. Pierre Latour's 1882 patent illustrated a chair similar in design to Fenby's, except that its joints were held with Latour's unique hinge design.

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While Gold Medal continued to supply furniture to US forces in the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and in Cuba, export sales also increased due to the exposure of the company's products in foreign countries.¹³ Missionaries and explorers equipped with Gold Medal furniture introduced the company's products to various countries, which spurred demand from both organizations and foreign governments. Between thirty and thirty-five percent of the company's sales prior to World War I were from exports.¹⁴ However, Canada, which provided ample camping wilderness, limited imports through high tariffs. Gold Medal built a second factory in 1910 in Ontario in order to circumvent tariffs and to maintain a strong position in the Canadian camp furniture market. According to the journal *American Exporter*, Gold Medal was the only US manufacturer in 1914 to produce and export a wide range of camp furniture.¹⁵

By 1916, substantial brick additions had to be built to handle the ever-growing demand; over 200 employees worked in the factory.¹⁶ Not only did the new addition provide space for increased furniture production, it also allowed Gold Medal to produce a new line of portable "fold-up" houses and frames, which were larger than tents and quickly became popular with campers venturing to the National Parks.¹⁷ However, within a year the new facilities were strained and additional factory alterations were planned. In October 1916, the company sent a letter to its distributors and clients explaining:

The big demand for "Gold Medal" products completely exhausted our reserve stock and compels our factory to work both night and day in an effort to get caught up on our orders. We are still several weeks behind, but we have increased our equipment with the view to increased production.¹⁸

By 1917, Gold Medal supplied folding furniture for the United States government, the National Guard, YMCAs and YWCAs across the county, and the Boy Scouts.¹⁹

While Gold Medal worked to fulfill civilian orders, the company also managed to complete its largest order up to that time, which was for the US Government and allied forces for their involvement in World War I. The American Red Cross ordered over 20,000 additional stretchers at the start of the war.

¹³ *Racine Daily Journal*, November 11, 1905.

¹⁴ "Local Man Talks to Rotary Club," *Racine Journal-News*, September 25, 1918. 10.

¹⁵ "Hardware and Tools," *American Exporter: A Monthly Journal of Foreign Trade*, 75(5) November, 1914. 102;

¹⁶ Fanny S. Stone, *Racine Belle City of the Lakes and Racine County Wisconsin*, Volume 1 (Chicago: S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1916) 256.

¹⁷ *The Wood-Worker*, December 1915. 52; Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company letter, dated July 8, 1915. Flatwater Agency Paper & Collectibles (Southwick, Massachusetts). website: <http://www.tias.com>, accessed: October 9, 2017.

¹⁸ Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company letter, dated October 18, 1916. Flatwater Agency Paper & Collectibles (Southwick, Massachusetts). website: <http://www.tias.com>, accessed: October 9, 2017.

¹⁹ Advertisement, *Outing*, April 1917.

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Over one million cots and several hundred thousand stretchers were sent to the front lines in Europe. The company's contract called for over 2,000 to be delivered each day.²⁰ Besides cots, the US Army purchased bed rolls, folding officer's chairs, camp mattresses, and several other types of items.²¹

Following World War I, Gold Medal saw new leadership. Second generation company president William L. Gittings returned from World War I and took over the company from his father, William G. Gittings, who died in 1918. The company continued to produce camping furniture and witnessed the ever-rising popularity of its products. Through the 1920s, many of the company's already popular pieces, the "no. 3 campaign chair," the "no. 35 chair," "and the "Gold Medal no. 1 cot" all became familiar to the public as standard equipment. Gold Medal expanded their factory once again, and continued to publish simple yet effective advertisements in many important magazines and journals including: *Popular Science*, *Outing*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Country Life in America*, *Recreation*, *Boys' Life*, *Outers' Recreation*, and *The Rotarian*, among others devoted to the "great outdoors." While outdoor adventure accounted for the majority of Gold Medal's sales, many of the company's pieces also were marketed for hospital and sanitarium settings. Outdoor folding recliners, wheel chairs, and adjustable backrests became important elements of patients' comfort.²²

Advertising alone was sufficient to carry the Gold Medal name in camping furniture, as there were few competitors, but additional exposure through use by famous people was always welcome. As with Teddy Roosevelt's safaris in Africa during the 1900s, Gold Medal again supplied folding furniture for expeditions by famous celebrities. Between 1915 and 1924, three titans of industry and invention, Thomas Edison, Henry Ford, and Harvey Firestone, along with naturalist John Burroughs held a series of annual camping trips into the outdoors of the Appalachians, New England, and Michigan. Calling themselves the Four Vagabonds, the quartet, sometimes with the company of other magnates and politicians, motored their way in large and luxurious caravans to picturesque natural places for campfire camaraderie. Stories and photographs of their travels were widely published. Images and films showing the Vagabonds "roughing it" in the great outdoors, while seated in banks of Gold Medal's no. 3 chairs, eating at large folding tables, and resting on portable cots captured the public's imagination and promoted "motoring" and camping to a new generation. The Vagabonds held their last trip in 1924 as media coverage became unbearable for the travelers.

Celebrity also made Gold Medal's folding "no. 35 chair" into an iconic design, recognizable around the world. The "no. 35 chair" was introduced in the company's 1903 catalog as part of series of folding furniture for use on porches. Despite its limited intended purpose, the X-shaped folding chair was very comfortable and could be used for both camping and as a general chair. The piece was composed

²⁰ "General news," *The St. Louis Lumberman*, July 1, 1917. 58.

²¹ "Local Man Talks to Rotary Club," *Racine Journal-News*, September 25, 1918. 10.

²² *The Modern Hospital Year Book*, 1920 Edition (Chicago: The Modern Hospital Publishing Company, Inc., 1920) 868.

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simply of turned wood legs supporting a canvas seat, flat armrests, and a canvas back. It was purchased by several film supply companies during the late 1910s at a time when the burgeoning movie industry was moving to California for its warm climate. By 1922, the chair had become standard equipment on movie sets, which led it to be nicknamed the “director’s chair.”²³ Film studio supply companies provided the chair as comfortable seating during filming sessions for directors and lead actors and actresses. Chairs bearing stars’ names could be found on nearly every American movie set.

The “no. 35 chair” entered popular culture through glossy magazines and reviews, which showed Hollywood stars and other famous people seated in the recognizable chair.²⁴ Industrial designer Victor J. Papanek published a book in 1972 called *Design for the Real World* and identified three chair designs from around 500 that he determined were “great” chairs. The director’s chair was one. He wrote, “It is extremely comfortable to sit in for long periods of time and that is quite unusual for a chair without cushions or pads.”²⁵ The director’s chair remained one of Gold Medal’s bestselling products throughout the company’s history. Gold Medal continued to produce the chair at the Racine factory, and patented various design changes to the chair through the 1960s. The “no. 35 director’s chair” persists today as an iconic design held in collections including the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

Gold Medal changed its name from Gold Medal Camp Furniture to Gold Medal Folding Furniture in 1930, reflecting the company’s focus on designing folding furniture that could be used in a range of situations. New lines of folding chairs and garden sets with decorative patterned fabrics were designed and marketed for use at home. The now famous “no. 35 director’s chair” was also produced in a range of fabric options for domestic interior and exterior decoration. In addition, a taller variation of the chair was designed for use on yachts, motor boats, and docks after company president William L. Gittings recognized emerging recreational trends around motor boating would become another popular form of recreation.

During World War II, Gold Medal resumed the position it had held during the First World War and the Spanish-American War as the US Government’s supplier of cots, stretchers, folding sinks, tables, tents and other equipment. The Racine factory became an official factory for the production of military supplies and was overseen by government inspectors. Following the war, great quantities of surplus folding furniture were sold by the government, flooding the market, which forced Gold Medal to adjust.

²³ “A Good Hunch for Lawn Furniture,” *Hardware World*, June 1922. 138.

²⁴ Witold Rybczynski, *Now I Sit Me Down* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2016) 161.

²⁵ Victor Papanek, *Design for the Real World: human ecology and social change* (New York: Pantheon Book, 1972).

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Third generation Gittings brothers, Robert, John B., and William D. joined Gold Medal following World War II, and led the company's re-invention. While still producing its most popular furniture pieces, the "no. 35 director's chair" and several other folding chairs, Gold Medal started to focus on domestic furniture. Pieces such as the "no. 35 director's chair" were reinvented as promotional premium pieces. Several new patents for the chair specified changes to the design of the arms, the taper of the legs, and the mechanical components in order to create a more decorative piece. Customized silk screening and embroidering of names and logos for chair backs allowed customers to buy personalized director's chairs.

By the 1950s, Gold Medal was one of only a few companies that continued to build outdoor furniture of wood. In 1955, the company closed its lumber yard on the block west of the factory and switched to buying completed parts from wood milling plants elsewhere in the country. Later, in 1959, Gold Medal introduced a new line of aluminum furniture, which included an aluminum version of the director's chair.

The Gold Medal Company continued to grow through the 1970s, expanding lines, and introducing new furniture styles. Stretchers and cots were still produced, but the director's chair remained its best seller, with over 5,000 built each week in eight different models. In the 1970s, the company hired a consultant who prompted Gold Medal to focus on casual interior furniture. John Gittings, who was then the executive vice-president, explained in 1972, "we felt that our growth was going to come in casual furniture... We were able to take our old and established designs, and with some redesigning and good color sense, move them into the home."²⁶ The company introduced a new line of Contemporary style, non-folding furniture. Two years later, in 1974, the company was renamed Gold Medal, Inc. In an attempt to expand the company a new facility was opened in Tennessee in 1979, but by the 1980s foreign competition had significantly reduced Gold Medal's market share. The company began to phase out certain lines and finally halted production in 1986. Gold Medal was sold in 1989, and the licenses to its many popular furniture lines were acquired by companies, which today continue to produce some of Gold Medal's most iconic pieces.

Camping Furniture Trade in the United States

When the Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company was started in 1890 it was one of a few manufacturers in United States of collapsible camping furniture. At the time, most manufacturers of collapsible furniture specialized in the production of combination furniture that served multiple purposes, such as beds that fold up to form book cases or writing desks with a concealed wash basin. The production of furniture that was designed to weigh less and occupy less space than standard furniture formed a narrow market in the furniture industry. However, as interest in camping increased

²⁶ Dave Pfankuchen, "Gold Medal to Unveil a New Line of Furniture," *The Racine Journal Times*, October 8, 1972.

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between the 1880s and 1920s through books and magazines devoted to sportsman activities, so too did demand for specialized camping equipment. As a result, during this period, several manufacturers were established that produced either individual types of furniture or a variety of pieces. Many appear to have borrowed or improved on Lang's hinge patent and sold items that were similar to those produced by Gold Medal.

During the 1880s and 1890s, there were a few small companies focused in the Midwest and the East Coast that specialized in the manufacture of specific types of furniture, such as folding cots, chairs, or tables. One such short-lived company was the Tourists' Folding Cot Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan, which produced a cotton duck covered, plywood framed cot patented in 1886.²⁷ Another Grand Rapids manufacturer was organized in the early 1890s as the Grand Rapids Camp Furniture and Boat Company. It offered a wide range of products, including folding beds and washstands, in addition to tents and boating supplies.²⁸ However, despite a similar name and array of goods, the Gold Medal name was well established by 1892 as a leader in folding furniture for the outdoor enthusiast. Some of the books and magazines of the time, such as George O. Shields' 1890 book, *Camping and Camp Outfits*, mention only Gold Medal products.

New competitors appeared during the 1900s. One competitor, established in 1907, was the Tucker Duck & Rubber Company of Fort Smith, Arkansas. It produced a variety of waterproof canvas and rubber products, including awnings and coverings, camping cots and folding furniture. Campaign chairs and folding cots advertised by the company between the 1920s and 1940s appear similar in design to those produced by Gold Medal during the same time period.²⁹

Beginning in the 1910s, manufacturers started to use steel tubing in place of wood in folding furniture, which tended to make furniture lighter and therefore easier to transport. In New York City, the Glendale Manufacturing Company produced a canvas covered folding stool with steel legs.³⁰ The Kay-Dee Manufacturing Company of Lincoln, Nebraska started to produce metal folding tables during the 1920s for a wide range of uses, including camping.³¹ In 1924, it appears that the Kay-Dee Manufacturing Company bought by another Lincoln, Nebraska firm, the McGrew Machine Works. McGrew began producing not only folding tables but also steel-framed folding cots and folding stool among other products.³²

²⁷ Advertisement, "Tourists' Folding Cot Co.," *Harper's Weekly*, July 9, 1888: 419.

²⁸ Will Wildwood, *Sportsman's Directory* (Milwaukee: Fred E. Pond, 1891) XIII, 187.

²⁹ Advertisement, "Tucker Duck & Rubber Company," *Hardware World*, 1920: 95.

³⁰ "Glendale Steel Folding Chair," *Commercial America*, April 1913: 33; "Glendale Steel Folding Chair," *The Automobile*, June 20, 1912: 1404-1405.

³¹ "Kay-Dee MFG. Co.," *Outing*, June 1922: 142; An advertisement for The Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company is featured near Kay-Dee's advertisement.

³² "McGrew Machines Works," *Field & Stream*, May 1923: 151; "The McGrew Machine Works," *Iron Age*, 1924: 1388.

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The Gold Medal company remained a leader in the production of folding camping furniture through much of the twentieth century, with little competition. The few manufacturers that did appear either were short lived or were inconsequential to Gold Medal's established reputation in the industry. Within Wisconsin, there were no other known manufacturers of camping furniture during the late-nineteenth and the early- to mid-twentieth century.

Evolution of the Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company Buildings

R.B. Lang established the Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company in Racine in 1890, setting up operations in an existing frame factory located at the southeast corner of 13th and Clark Streets, approximately one-half mile northeast of the nominated property. The frame factory at 13th and Clark was a three-story building constructed by manufacturer James T. Tostevin. Lang acquired the 13th and Clark factory from Tostevin shortly thereafter as demand increased for Gold Medal products. The 13th and Clark factory building has been demolished.

In 1893, William G. Gittings purchased the Gold Medal Company from Lang. In 1894, Gittings relocated Gold Medal's operations to a new site, located at the southeast corner of 17th Street and Hamilton Avenue (currently named Memorial Drive), along a rail spur of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad. This site is located to the east of the current nominated property. It is important to note that at the time, this portion of 17th Street was situated fifty feet south of its current location. In 1894, Gittings constructed a 2-story frame factory building on this site, at the southeast corner of 17th and Hamilton. Shortly thereafter, Gittings constructed another two-story frame building for the company on the northeast corner of 17th and Hamilton (these two buildings are not extant and were demolished by 1937).

Sometime prior to 1902, Gittings acquired the site on which the nominated buildings would be constructed. This site was comprised of two lots located to the west of the 1894 site, on the west side of Hamilton Avenue. The first lot was bounded by Hamilton Avenue to the east, 17th Street to the north, Packard Avenue to the west, and the rail spur to the south (this lot is the site of the nominated factory building). The second lot was to the west of the first, and was bounded by Packard Avenue to the east, 17th Street to the north, Philips Avenue to the west, and the rail spur to the south (this lot is the site of the nominated administration building).

On the first lot, the company constructed in 1902 a rectangular two-story frame factory with a brick boiler room (this building is not extant). In 1905, Gold Medal constructed a brick two-story factory (Portion A) between the 1902 frame factory (not extant) to the east and Packard Avenue to the west. This 1905 brick two-story factory is the oldest portion of the nominated factory building, and its construction marks the beginning of the period of significance. This 1905 building, Gold Medal's first

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major brick factory building, was completed immediately west of the 1902 frame factory, separated by an alleyway, with frontage on Packard Avenue.³³ The two-story brick factory held finished products on the first floor, while fabric for assembled pieces was cut and sewn on the second floor. The building was built without set-backs, and consequently, featured clipped corners on its east (alley) elevation, which allowed wagons a wider, and therefore easier, turning radius.

With this new construction on the nominated site, the two former Gold Medal frame buildings (constructed in 1894 and located on the east side of Hamilton Avenue (currently named Memorial Drive), outside of the boundaries of the nominated site) became secondary buildings to the operations of the company. A 1908 Sanborn map shows that the frame building at the southeast corner of 17th and Hamilton was used as a warehouse, and the frame building at the northeast corner of 17th and Hamilton was vacant.

In 1909, Gold Medal constructed a new three-story brick building on the west side of Packard Avenue – this building is identified in the nomination as the administration building, and it housed the company's administration offices on the first floor, with storage for finished products on its upper floors. In 1912, Gold Medal constructed a steel truss bridge connecting the 1905 brick factory (Portion A) to the administration building.

In 1914, Gold Medal bought a non-associated factory building owned by Knud Jacobson located immediately north of the 1905 brick factory (Portion A). Gold Medal demolished the Jacobson factory and deeded a portion of the land to the city; at this time 17th Street was re-located fifty feet north to its present location. In 1914, Gold Medal built a one-story brick powerhouse at the northwest corner of Hamilton Avenue and the rail spur (Portion B).

In 1916, Gold Medal built a new three-story brick factory (Portion C), designed by local architect David R. Davis. The 1916 brick factory (Portion C) was constructed on the north side of the 1905 brick factory (Portion A). Gold Medal then immediately commissioned Davis to build another three-story brick factory on the east side of the 1916 brick factory. This brick factory was completed in 1917 (Portion D) and matched the 1916 brick factory in design.

By 1908, the company's first factory buildings on the east side of Hamilton Avenue remained; the first frame building, adjacent to the rail line, was still occupied by the company offices, while the second building was left vacant. In late 1908, plans for paving Packard Avenue with brick prompted Gold Medal to move its headquarters to the west side of Packard Avenue on a large block that it used to

³³ "Gold Medal Camp Furniture," *Dun's Review*, May 1905. 58.

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store lumber.³⁴ The building was to be directly across Packard Avenue from its newly-completed brick factory building. The three-story, brick administration building was of mill-type construction and contained the company's main offices on the first floor, with storage for finished products on the upper floors. In 1912, Gold Medal connected its new headquarters and its 1905 brick factory building with a steel truss bridge spanning Packard Avenue. New doorways were cut into the exteriors of both buildings at their second floors for the bridge, which allowed finished products to be moved from the factory to storage in the administration building.³⁵ Both brick buildings and the connecting bridge are extant.

Gold Medal's factory, between Hamilton and Packard avenues, was especially confining for the growing company. Immediately to the north of its buildings was a two-story, frame factory owned by patternmaker Knud F. Jacobson. According to fire insurance maps, Gold Medal supplied Jacobson's factory with electricity, steam, and heat. Yet, in 1914, when Gold Medal proposed moving 17th Street northward to its present location in order to create space for the construction of a new factory building and power plant, Jacobson objected on the grounds that a building would block his sunlight. Gold Medal had made a similar proposal in 1908.³⁶ Ultimately, Gold Medal bought Jacobson's factory, had it demolished, and deeded portion of the land to the city for the present 17th Street, which extends fully between Hamilton to Packard avenues.³⁷

With more space to expand, Gold Medal demolished the eastern end of its long, frame factory building and built a new, single-story brick power plant. This building remains at the southeast corner of the Gold Medal factory. In 1915, Gold Medal hired local architect David R. Davis to design a three-story and basement brick mill-type factory. The new building was erected on the southeast corner of Packard Avenue and present 17th Street for around \$17,000; it was completed in early 1916.³⁸ Within the following year, a second three-story and basement addition was built in the same style as the first. It filled the last undeveloped portion of Gold Medal's block and created a uniform north facade by extending the factory along 17th Street, between Packard and Hamilton Avenues. The new factories accommodated increased production and housed the company's production of its new line of portable house frames.

In 1924, Gold Medal again hired architect David R. Davis to design a new, \$30,000, three-story brick

³⁴ "Vote for Narrower Street Means Improvements," *Eau Clair Leader*, October 3, 1908. 2; "Council Finally Votes for 26 Feet," *Racine Daily Journal-Herald*, October 21, 1908. 1.

³⁵ Notice, *Racine Journal-News*, September 10, 1912; "Overhead bridge on Packard Ave. Eyesore, Claim," *Racine Journal-News*, September 12, 1912.

³⁶ "Company Seeking Street Vacation," *Racine Journal-News*, June 26, 1914. 8; "City May Vacate Portion of Street," *Racine Journal-News*, September 12, 1914.

³⁷ Real Estate, *Racine Journal-News*, October 10, 1914.

³⁸ "Factory," *American Contractor*, December 4, 1915. 80; "Factory," *American Contractor*, March 4, 1916. 84.

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factory building addition.³⁹ In 1924, Gold Medal demolished the 1902 frame factory building and in its place constructed a new three-story brick factory (Portion E) on its footprint, between the 1905 brick factory (Portion A) and the 1914 brick powerhouse (Portion B). The construction of the 1924 brick factory (Portion E) completed the factory as it appears today.

No significant additions were made after 1924. As the large masonry factory building took shape, the two frame buildings that stood across the street (on the east side of Hamilton Avenue) were used for storage; no manufacturing occurred in those buildings. The two 1894 frame buildings were both demolished by the company by 1937, within the period of significance. This site is now occupied by a grass lawn and is not associated with the Gold Medal Company. The lumber yard on Gold Medal's western block was converted in 1958 to a parking lot following the company's decision to outsource the production of wooden parts in 1955.

Mill-Type Construction

Nearly all of Gold Medal's factory space occupied mill-type buildings. This type of building was developed during the mid-nineteenth century for New England's wool milling industry, but became a standard form of construction for a variety of lofts and warehouses by the turn of the twentieth century. The method of substantial all-wood beam construction was both beneficial for slowing the spread of fire and it was comparatively less expensive than specially-designed forms of fire proof construction.

All-wood construction consisted of evenly-spaced solid wood posts supporting a central wood beam carrying a series of smaller wood beams and a tongue and groove plank floor above. Most mill buildings were compartmentalized by floor, with metal fire door separations used to seal off stairwells and elevator shafts. Other fire-proofing features included the elimination of interstitial wall and ceiling cavities where fire could travel. In the case that a fire did erupt, tightly-laid plank floors were designed to hold and pool water from sprinklers, which would protect them from heat and flames; scuppers in the outer brick walls could be opened to release water. All these fire prevention systems persisted and were improved in later mill-type buildings.⁴⁰ The Gold Medal Company building exhibits several examples of fire mitigation systems in addition to its predominantly wood timbered interior flooring structure.

Finally, mill-type construction typically offered lower floor load rating than other, more substantial and more expensive steel or concrete loft construction.⁴¹ However, for the Gold Medal Company, a

³⁹ "Racine, Wis," *Industry Week*, 1924. 1045; *Iron Age*, 1924. 809.

⁴⁰ Betsy Hunter Bradley, *The Works: The Industrial Architecture of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 127-129.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 125.

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lower load rating was enough for the company's manufacture and storage of typically lightweight folding furniture.

Architect David R. Davis (1863-1935)

Architect David R. Davis was born in New York City in 1863 and studied architecture as a draftsman with various New York architects. Early in his career he moved to North Dakota as a government employee, and drafted plans for buildings and outposts on Indian reservations. Completing this work, he moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota to work for architect Treuman Dudley Allen, where he met his wife. Davis then moved with his wife to Racine and opened his own practice.

Davis designed numerous factory buildings in Racine including buildings for the Horlick Malted Milk Corporation, the Harvey Spring Company (17th Street and Phillips Avenue, extant), the Progressive Dairy Plant, and for the Case T. M. Company. His work was not limited to industrial facilities, but included a range of commercial and residential structures, primarily in Racine.⁴² One such house was a large frame home designed for Gold Medal vice-president E. E. Bailey at 2016 Washington Avenue (extant).⁴³ In 1935, members of the eighth district Association of Wisconsin Architects petitioned Racine's Mayor Swoboda to name Davis as supervising architect for all Public Works Administration building projects. In January of that year, prior to his death, Davis was granted the honor of the position.

Conclusion

The Gold Medal Company building is significant under National Register Criterion A for its association with the Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company, a local manufacturer that became a national leader in the design and production of a variety of collapsible folding furniture. Gold Medal's products were originally designed to meet the demands of sportsmen and adventurers exploring the wilderness. However, the company's customer base widened when its products were selected by the United States Government as industry standards for their efficient design and durability.

Built between 1905 and 1924, the purpose-built manufacturing building was expanded several times as the Gold Medal Company expanded its operation and production lines. In 1909, the company constructed an administration building to the west of the factory. The nominated property represents the Gold Medal company's headquarters and served as the facility where nearly all furniture lines were designed, produced, and shipped. The Gold Medal Company remained a significant Racine furniture

⁴² "David R. Davis, Architect, Dies," *Racine Journal-Times*, February 18, 1935. 1, 18.

⁴³ "Contracts Awarded," *American Contractor*, January 18, 1919. 58G; According to the United States Census for 1910 and 1920, George Teall and many Gittings family members lived along Washington Avenue.

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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

manufacturing concern for nearly a century until it closed in 1986. The Gold Medal building remains as the only production facility in Racine associated with the Gold Medal Company yet is the property associated with the company's rise to prominence and continued success resulting in expansion, and represents Racine's role in a specialized segment of Wisconsin's furniture industry.

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Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

Verbal Boundary Description:

Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company is on a 2-acre site located at 1700 Packard Avenue in Racine, Wisconsin. The nominated property is bounded to the north by 17th Street, to the east by Memorial Drive, and to the south by the south edge of a former railroad right-of-way that now serves as a gravel drive. The fifty-foot distance from the building's footprint to the south edge of the gravel drive is applied from the west elevation of the administration building, forming the west boundary.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary encompasses the buildings associated with the Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company during the period of significance, including sufficient land to express the setting while excluding peripheral land that does not contribute to the property's significance.

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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

Photo Log

Name of Property: Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company

City or Vicinity: Racine

County: Racine **State:** Wisconsin

Photographer: John Cramer

Date Photographed: July 2017

Location of Original Digital Files: State Historic Preservation Office, Wisconsin Historical Society

Photo 1

South and east facades of the Factory
Camera facing northwest

Photo 2

East and north facades of the Factory
Camera facing southwest

Photo 3

North and west facades of the Factory
Camera facing southeast

Photo 4

West and south facades of the Factory
Camera facing northeast

Photo 5

South and east facades of the 1909 Administration Building
Camera facing northwest

Photo 6

North facade of the 1909 Administration Building
Camera facing southwest

Photo 7

West facade of the 1909 Administration Building
Camera facing northwest

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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

Photo 8
Private alley bisecting the Factory
Camera facing east

Photo 9
Typical stair in the Factory 1917 section
Camera facing southwest

Photo 10
Ground floor of the Factory 1924 section
Camera facing west

Photo 11
Ground floor of the Factory 1917 section
Camera facing north

Photo 12
Ground floor of the 1909 Administration Building
Camera facing northeast

Photo 13
Upper floor of the 1909 Administration Building
Camera facing southeast

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Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

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Figure 4: Factory, Second Floor Photo Key

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Figure 6: Administration Building, Basement and First Floor Photo Key

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Figure 8: 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

Figure 9: 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

Figure 10: 1969 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

Figure 11: View of c.1917 addition under construction – looking southwest.

Racine Heritage Museum

Figure 12: East and north elevations – looking southwest, c.1918. *Racine Heritage Museum*

Figure 13: Factory – looking southwest. *Gold Medal Folding Furniture* [Catalog] 1933

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Camping in 1921 and sitting in Gold Medal chairs. *Library of Congress*

Figure 17: Marlene Dietrich and Charlie Chaplin sitting in Gold Medal chairs on the set of a movie
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Figure 18: Publicity photo for “The Magnificent Seven” in 1960 showing actors and their Gold Medal
chairs.

Figure 19: USGS Map

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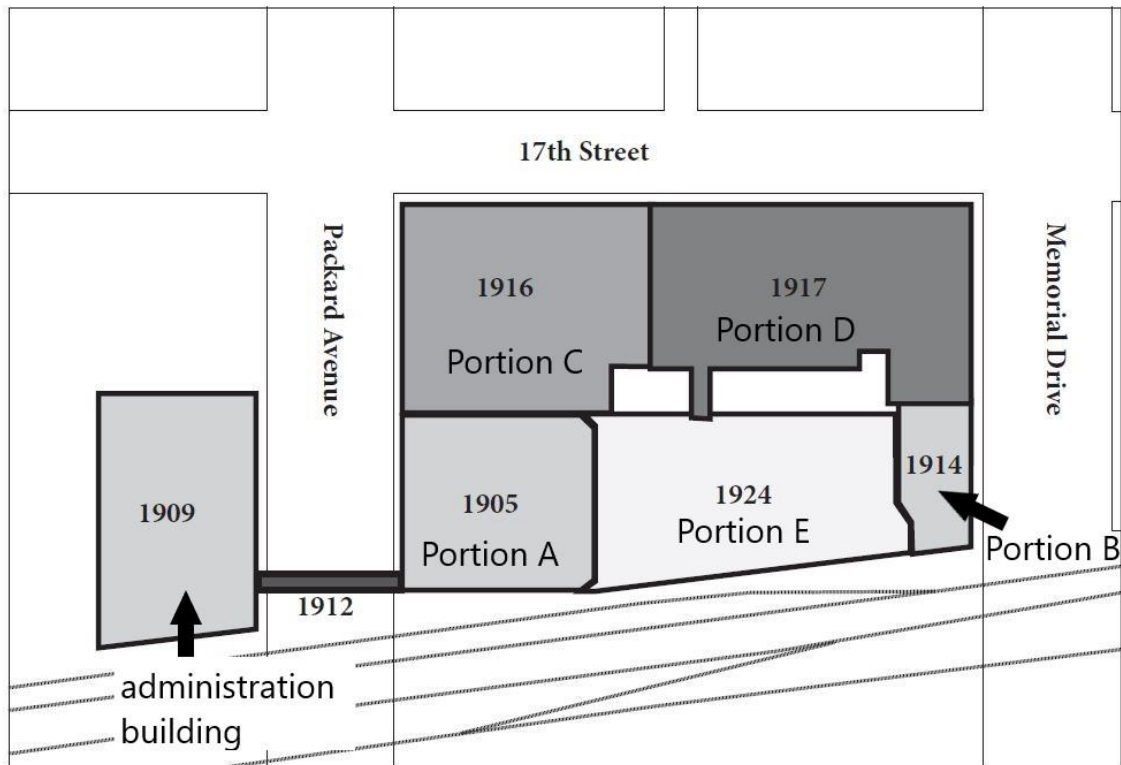
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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

Figure 1: Site Chronology

Gold Medal Camp Furniture Factory – Racine, Wisconsin



Site Chronology

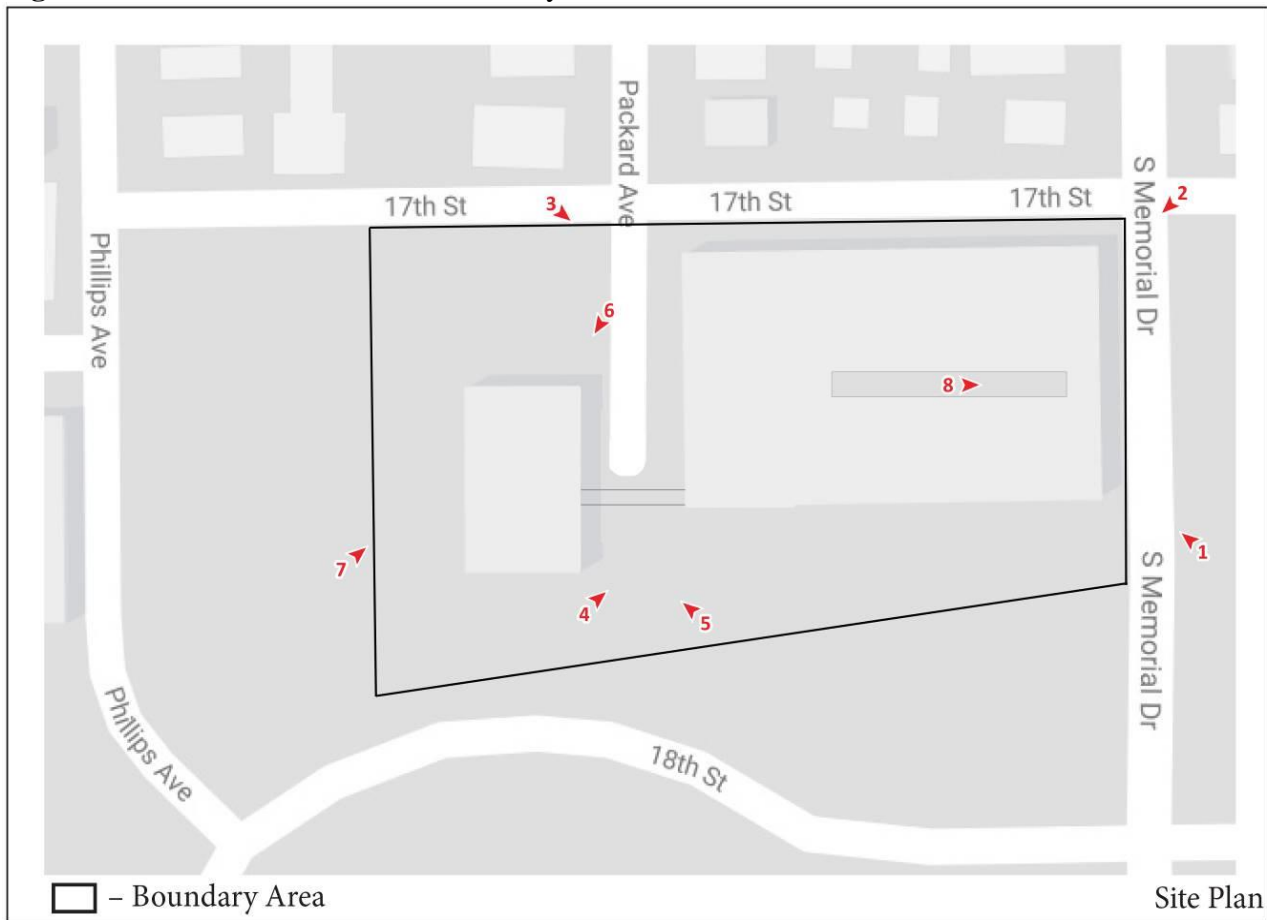
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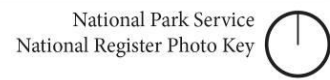
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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
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Figure 2: Site Plan and Exterior Photo Key



Gold Medal Camp Furniture Factory
1700 Packard Avenue
Racine, Wisconsin



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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

Figure 3: Factory, First Floor Photo Key



First Floor Plan – East Block



MacRostie Historic Advisors
Bringing strategy, equity, and experience
to historic building development

Gold Medal Camp Furniture Factory
1700 Packard Avenue
Racine, Wisconsin

National Park Service
National Register Photo Key



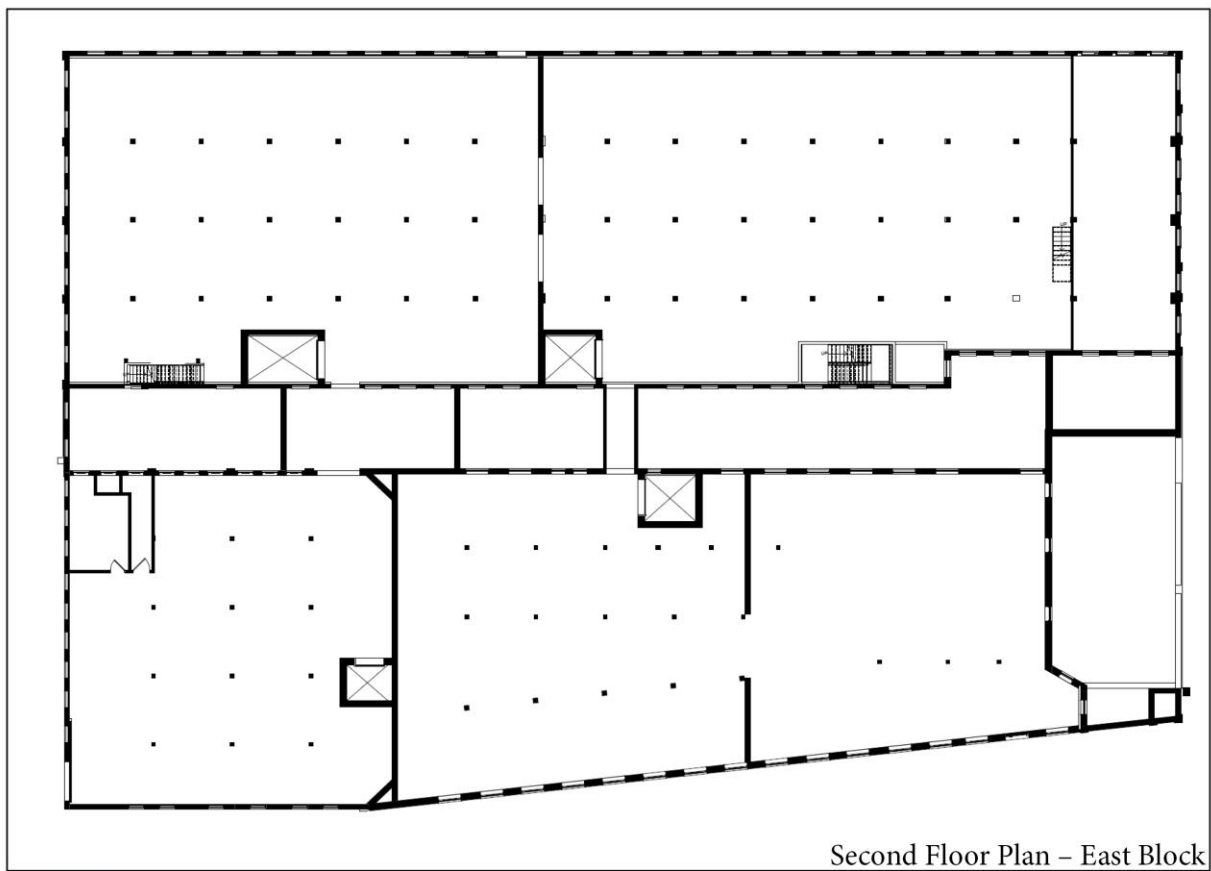
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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
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Figure 4: Factory, Second Floor Photo Key



Second Floor Plan - East Block



Gold Medal Camp Furniture Factory
1700 Packard Avenue
Racine, Wisconsin

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National Register Photo Key



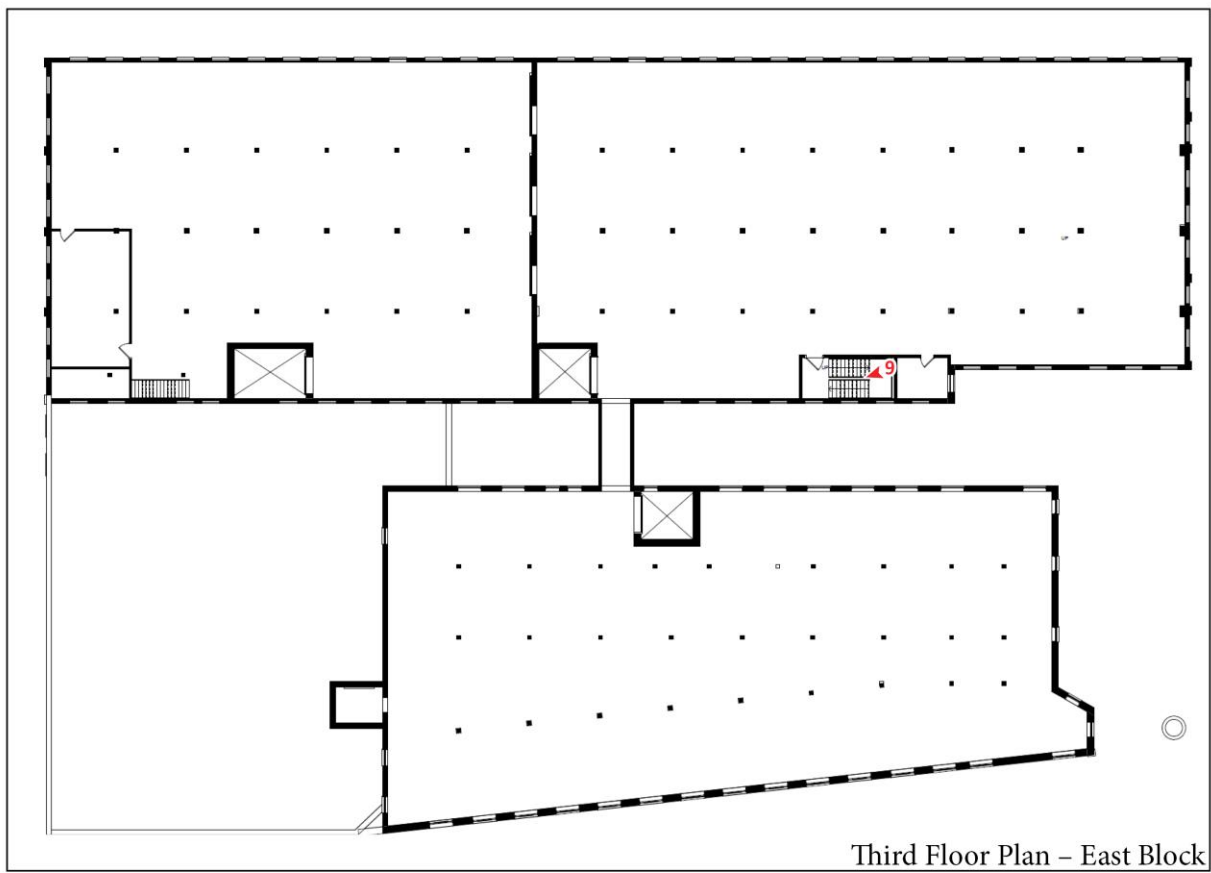
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Figure 5: Factory, Third Floor Photo Key



Third Floor Plan - East Block



Gold Medal Camp Furniture Factory
1700 Packard Avenue
Racine, Wisconsin

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National Register Photo Key



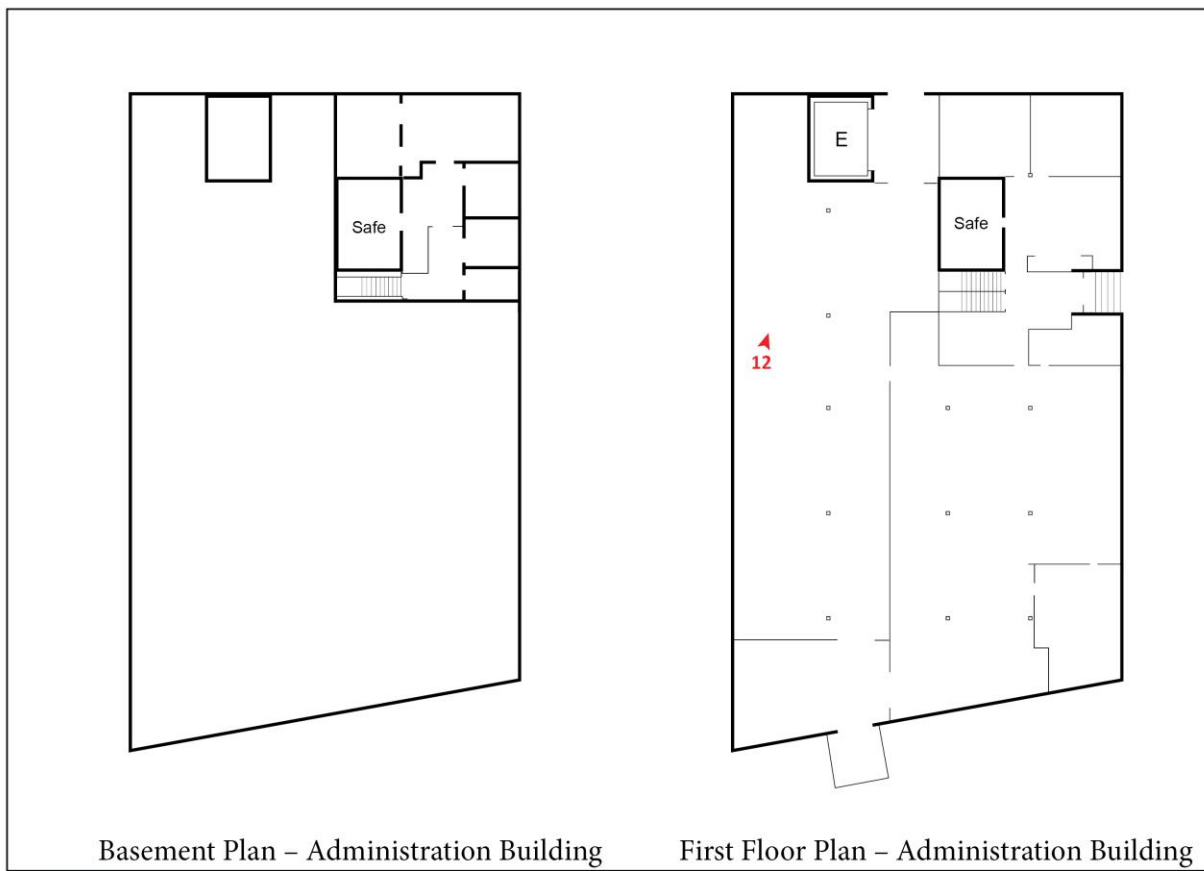
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Figure 6: Administration Building, Basement and First Floor Photo Key



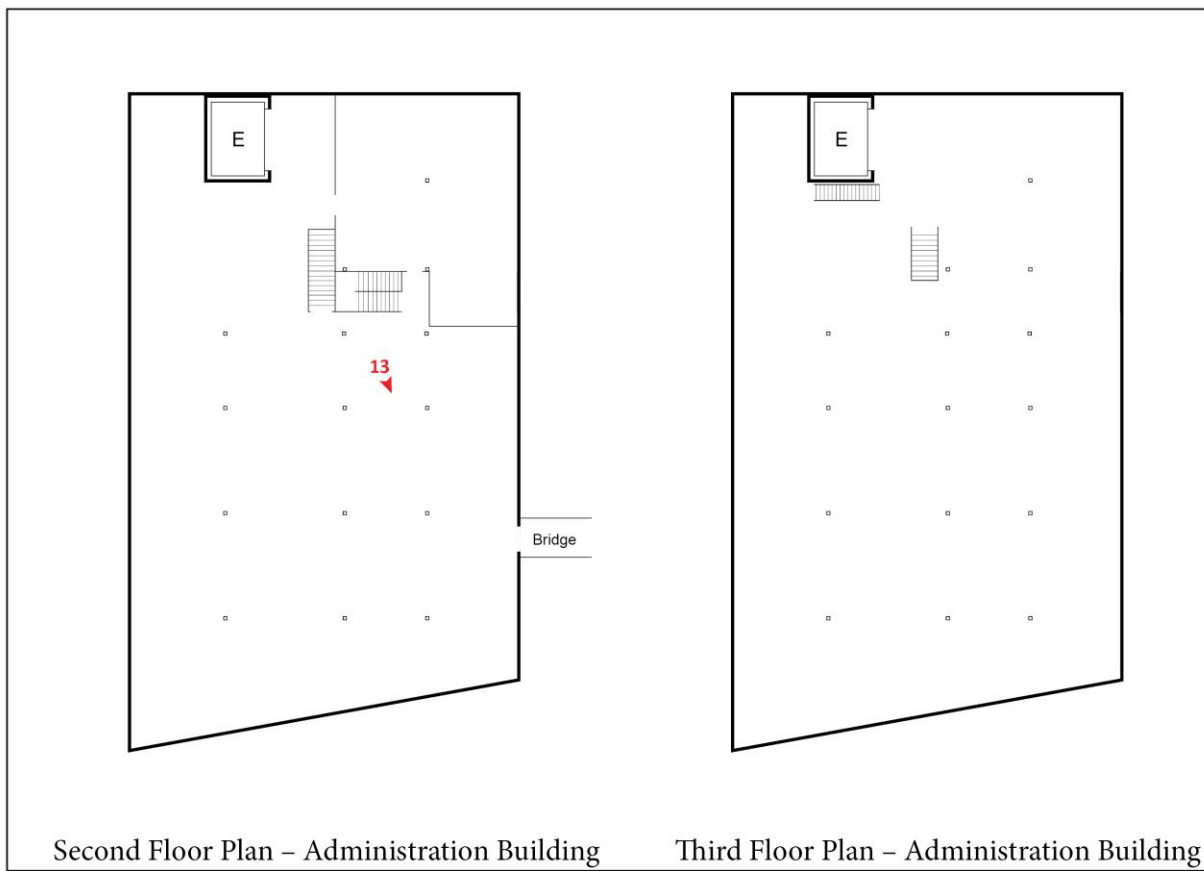
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Figure 7: Administration Building, Second and Third Floor Photo Key



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Figure 8: 1908 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

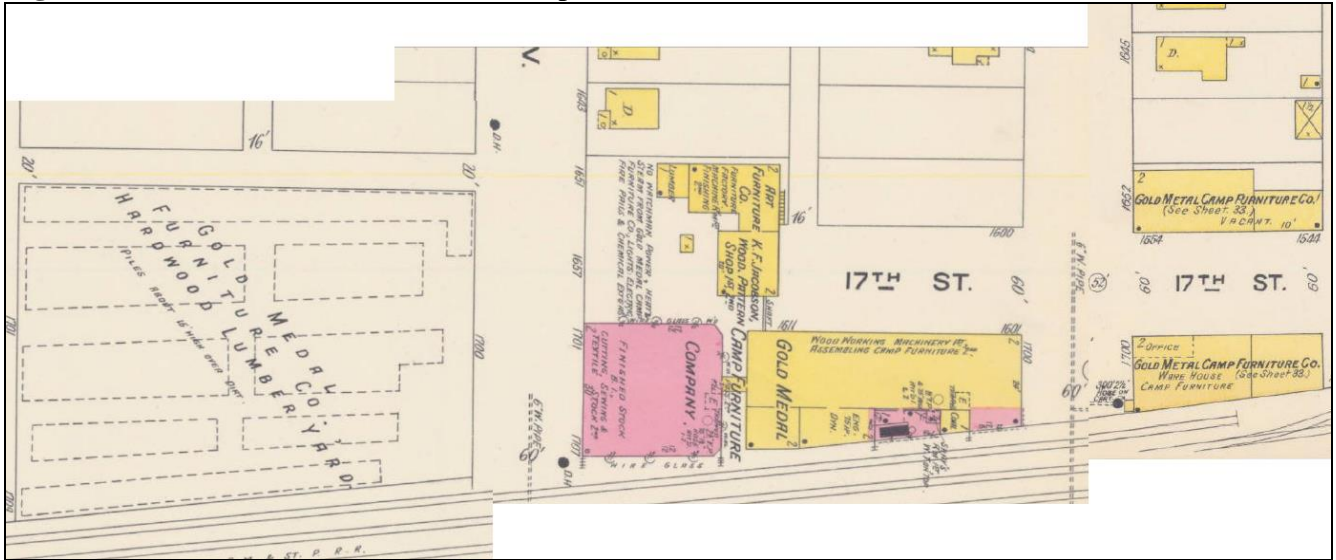
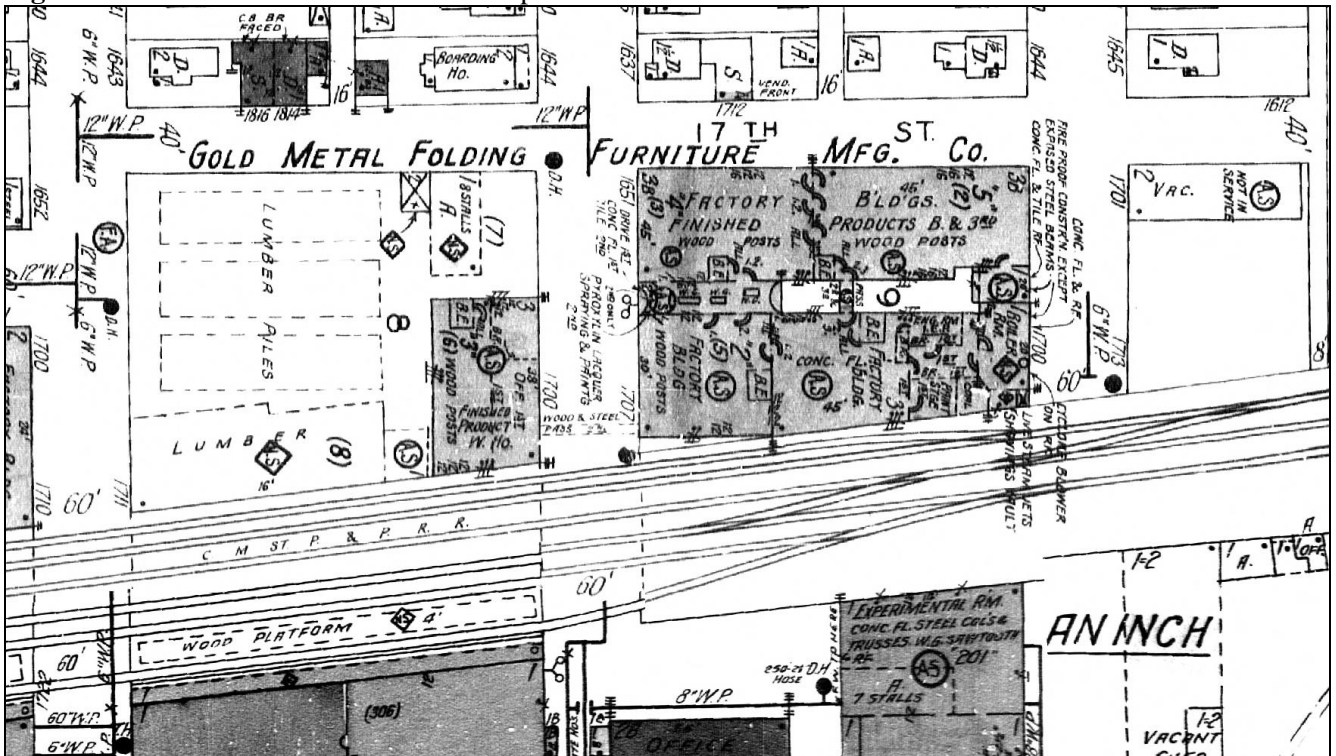


Figure 9: 1933 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map



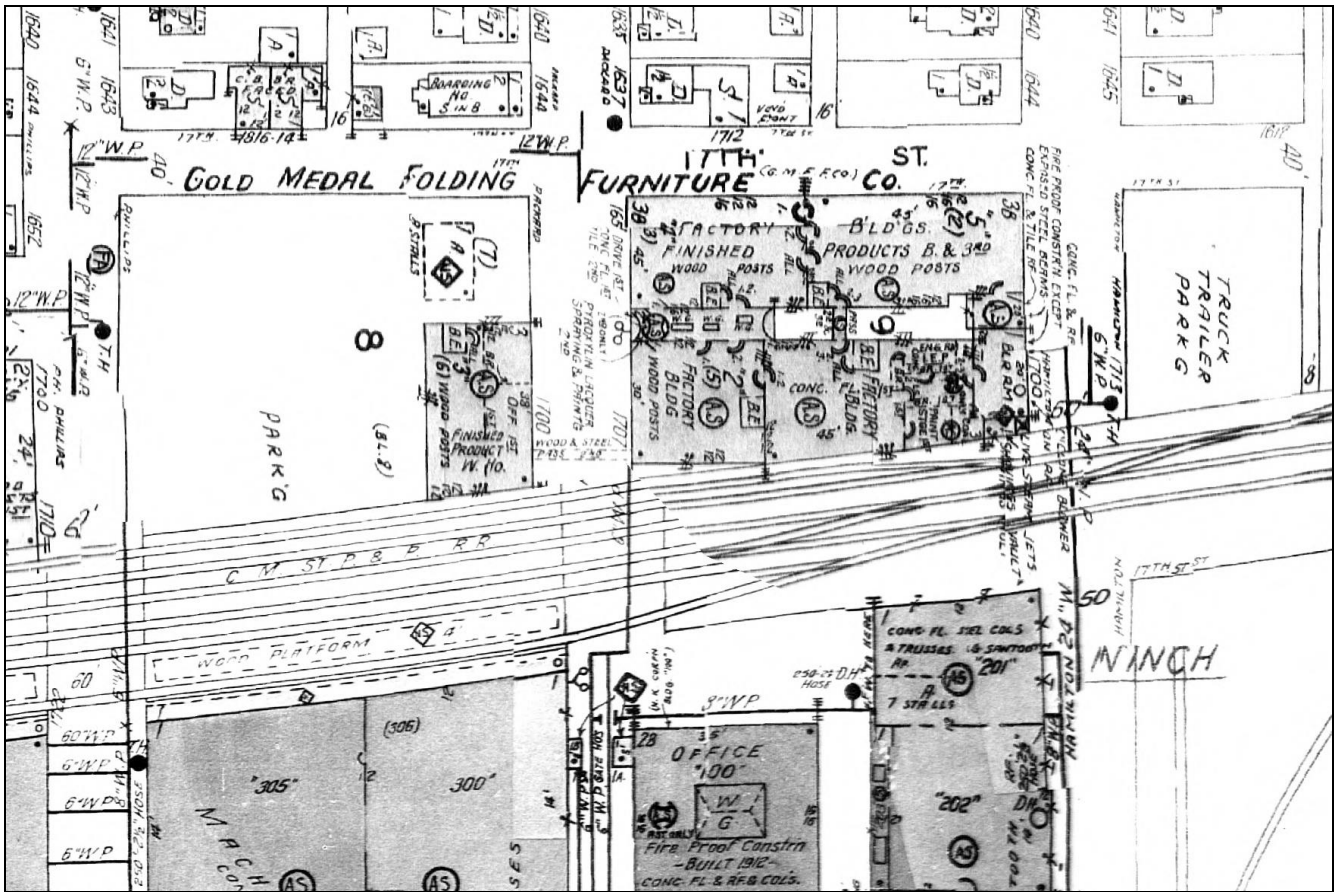
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Figure 10: 1969 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map



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Figure 11: View of c.1917 addition under construction – looking southwest.
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Figure 12: East and north elevations – looking southwest, c.1918. *Racine Heritage Museum*



Figure 13: Factory – looking southwest. *Gold Medal Folding Furniture* [Catalog] 1933.



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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
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Figure 14: First floor of the c.1917 section – looking southwest, c.1920s. *Racine Heritage Museum*

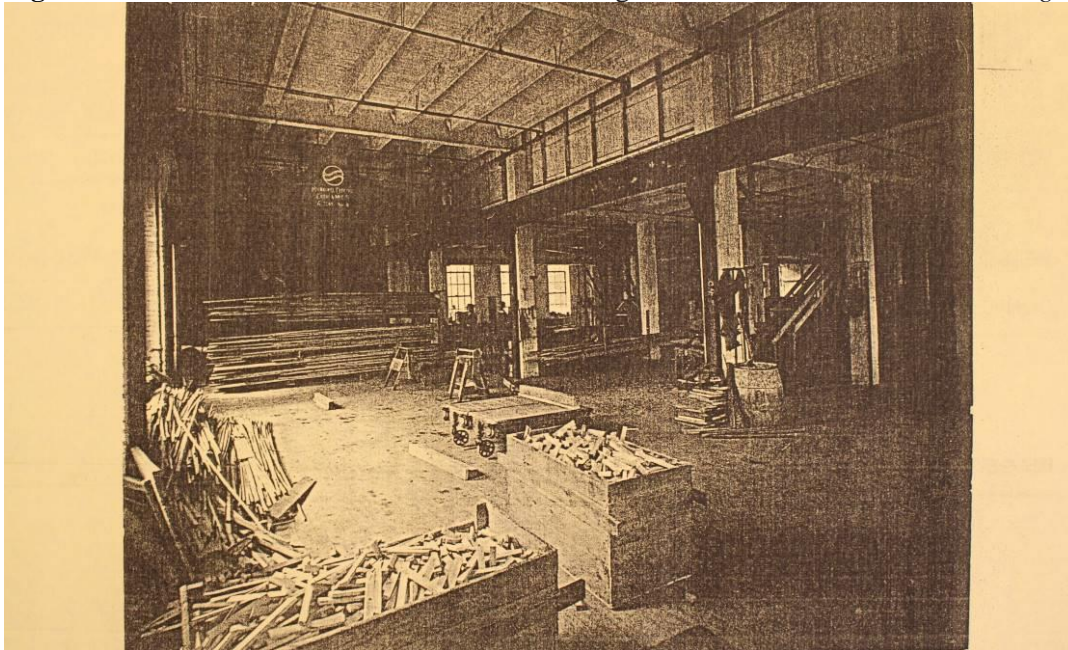
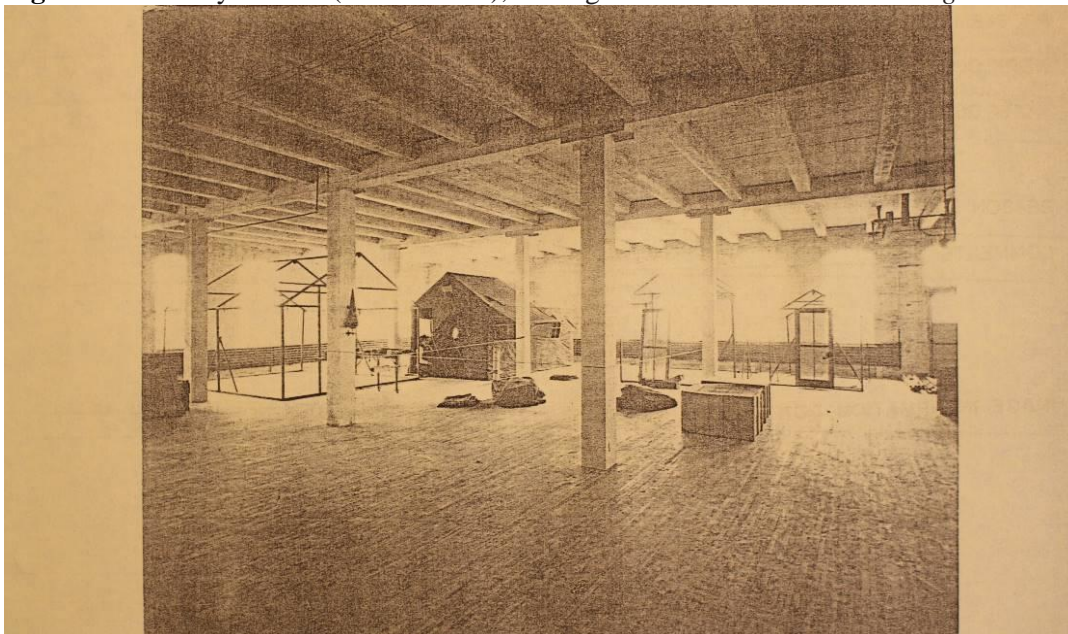


Figure 15: Factory interior (1916 section), folding house frames. *Racine Heritage Museum*



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Figure 16: "The Vagabonds," Henry Ford, Thomas Edison, Warren G. Harding, Harvey Firestone. Camping in 1921 and sitting in Gold Medal chairs. *Library of Congress*



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Figure 17: Marlene Dietrich and Charlie Chaplin sitting in Gold Medal chairs on the set of a movie production.
Paramount Pictures



Marlene Dietrich – Charlie Chaplin

Figure 18: Publicity photo for “The Magnificent Seven” in 1960 showing actors and their Gold Medal chairs.



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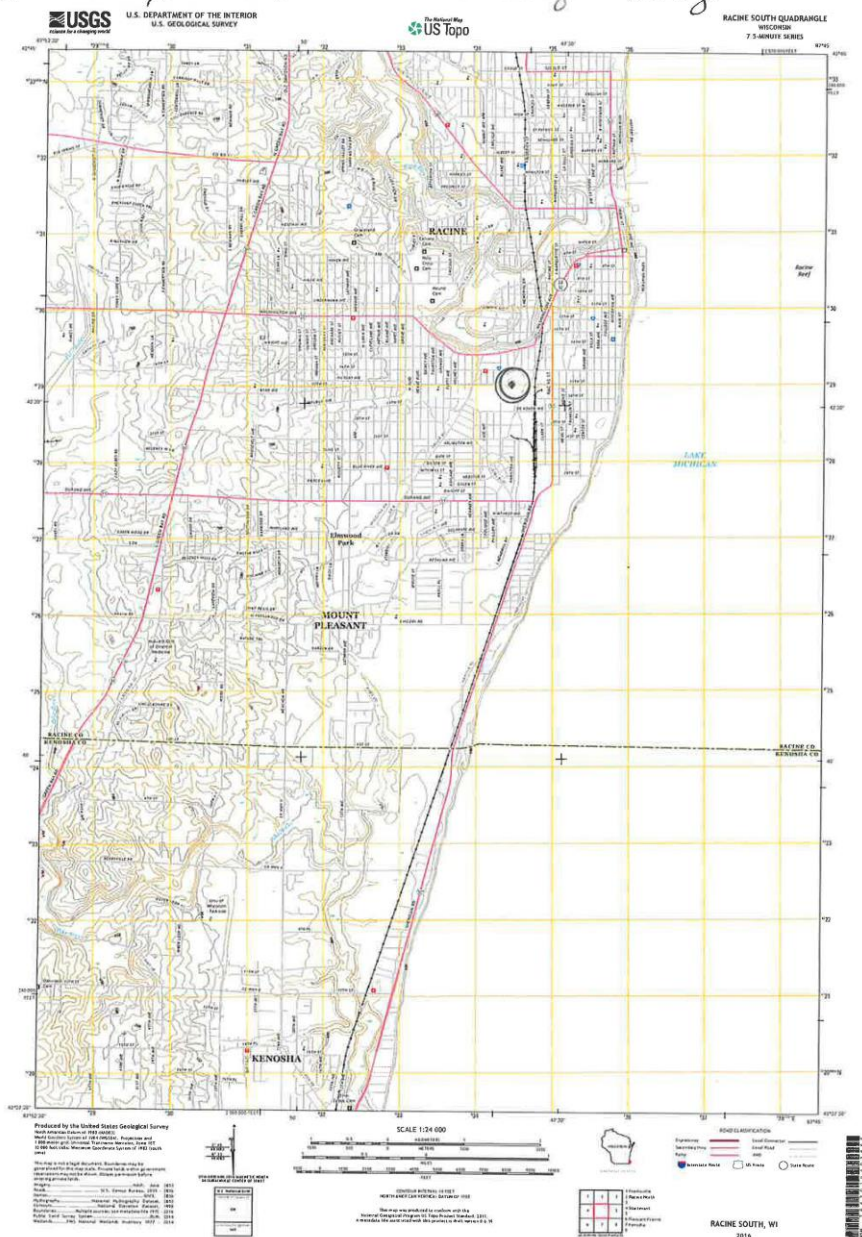
Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

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Figure 19: USGS Map

Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company
1700 Packard Avenue
Racine, Racine County, Wisconsin

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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company, Racine, Racine County, 2 of 13



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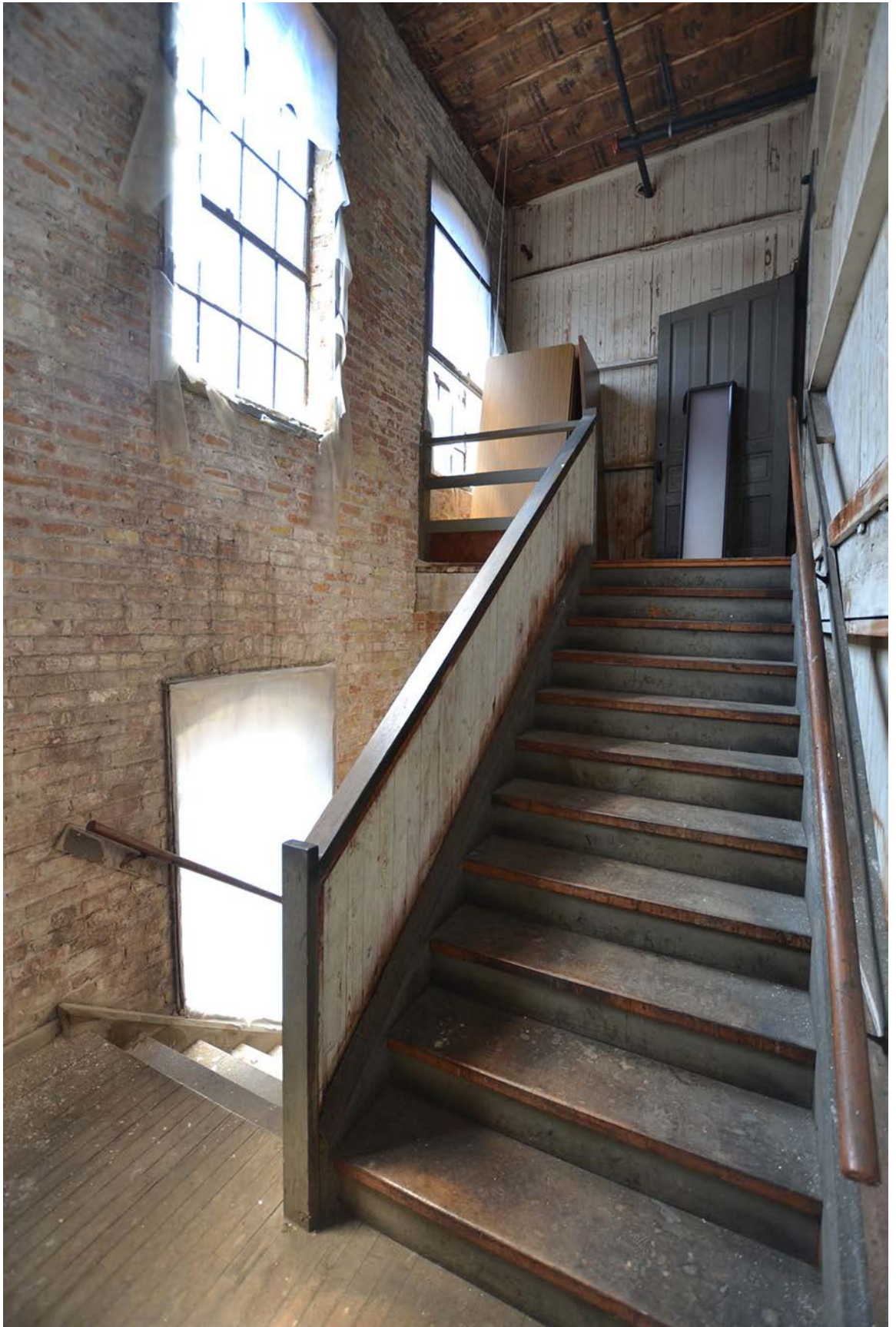
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Gold Medal Camp Furniture Company, Racine, Racine County, 7 of 13



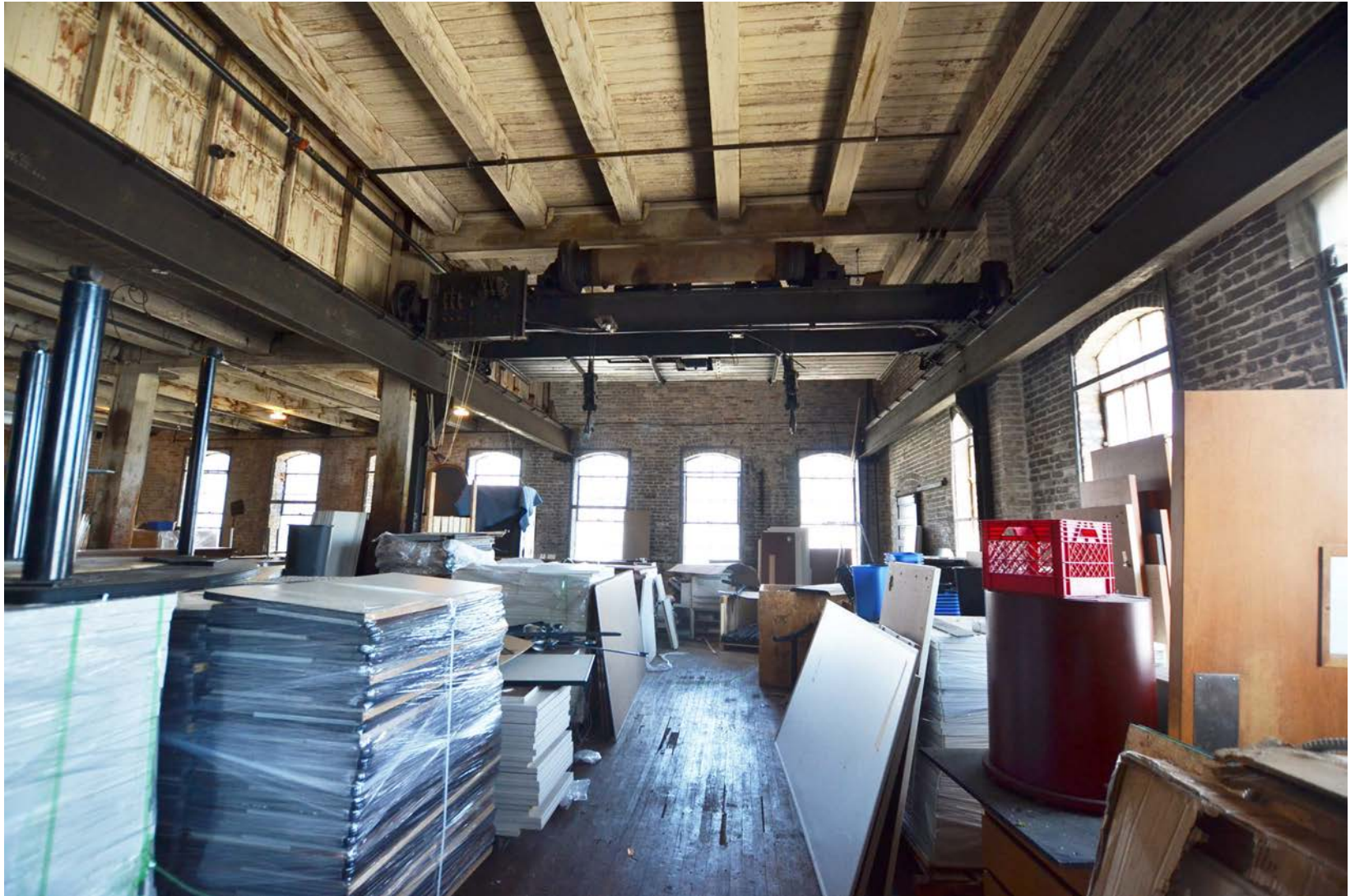
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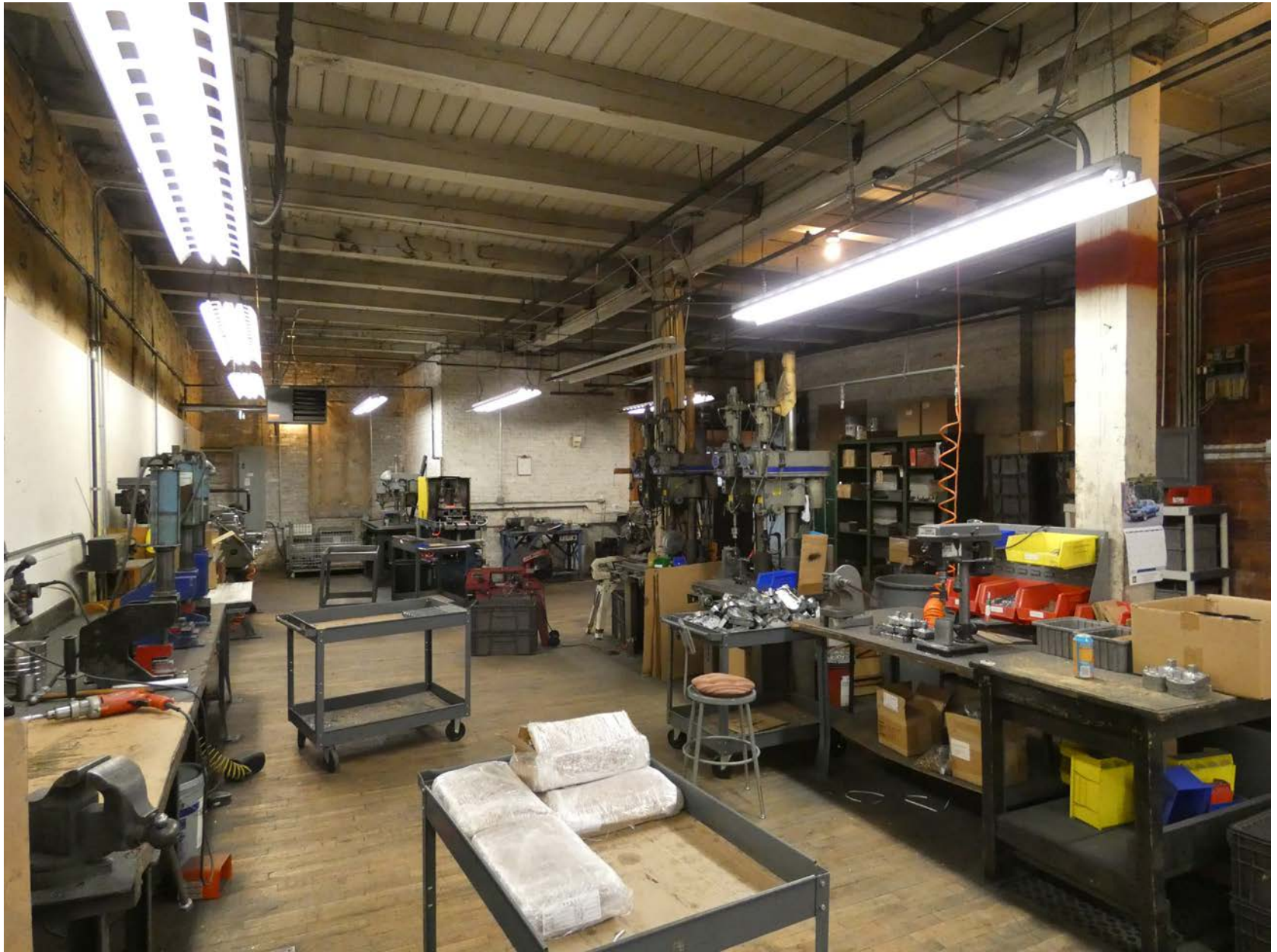
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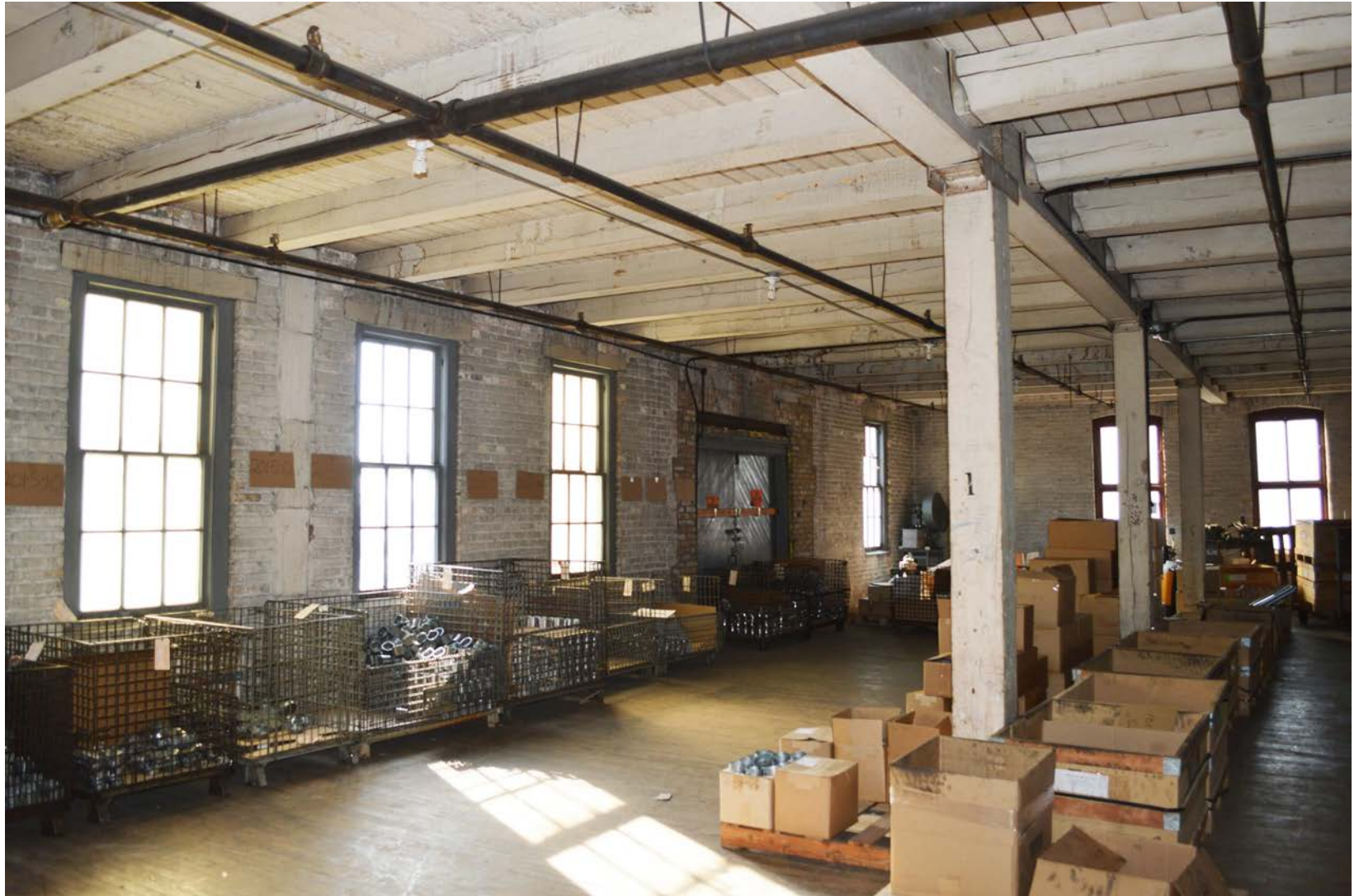
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