

# SOCIETY FOR INDUSTRIAL ARCHEOLOGY

## NEWSLETTER

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### SIA savors industrial Philly, 'Workshop of the World'



The Richmond Generating Station's coal tower (1925) on Pier 225, Delaware River, for the Phila. Electric Co. Large buckets unloaded barges on both sides; inside, the coal was crushed and sifted, then conveyed to bunkers. *R. Frame photo.*

Let us announce it directly: the SIA's 19th Annual Conference in Philadelphia was a resounding success, thanks to our excellent hosts, the Oliver Evans Chapter and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, National Park Service. For one long weekend, 19th- and early-20th-century industrial Philadelphia came out of the closet as the "Workshop of the

World." It wasn't easy, but the 18th century was temporarily trip-hammered into submission.

In an almost mystically Byzantine circuit of tours, banquets, receptions, and open houses, more than 300 of the faithful—surely some kind of record—reveled in the historical remnants of the city's vast transportation and utility





69th ST. TERMINAL & CAR SHOPS, MARKET-FRANKFORD EL.  
*Above: Inside the car shop. E.M. Kutsch photo.*  
*Below: Inside the motor shop. R. Frame photo.*



networks, mills, manufactories, and other sites of IA interest. When we weren't focusing on industry, we were absorbing the multicultural nature of neighborhoods with such intriguing names as Fishtown, Nicetown, Manayunk, and Northern Liberties, along with the nationally renowned Germantown, Fairmount Park, and South Philly. It was a conference that attempted the widest reach imaginable.

We learned about Philly IA by the immersion method, confronting over a dozen tours and other "pre-conference" events early on Thursday afternoon. Juggling armloads of registration packets, books, posters, and hardhats, we were hustled off in small groups to many of the city's early industrial neighborhoods. Travelling on foot, by bus, and even trolley, we visited a multitude of sites, including the Henry Disston & Sons Saw Works, textile mills along the Manayunk Canal, leather industry buildings, and Asher's Candy Co. Those with specialized IA interests in bridges and breweries had tours of their own. Latecomers had to settle for open houses at the Atwater Kent Museum and the American Philosophical Society. By Thursday evening, many of us had already worked our way through miles of local industry and several rolls of slide film, and the conference hadn't even been officially opened yet!

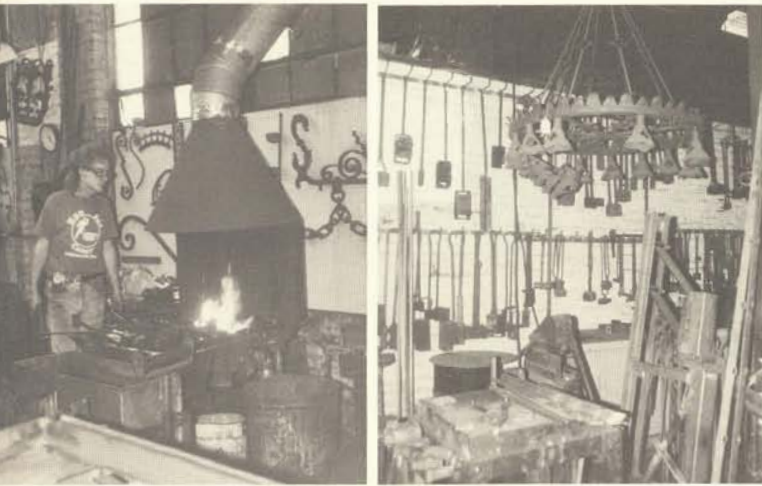
But leave it to the Oliver Evanses to put their own spin on the traditional Welcoming Reception, located at the Atwater Kent Museum and nicely accommodating those who would never find time to visit there otherwise. Disdaining the usual wine 'n cheese, the chapter assembled one of the oddest buffets most will ever browse through: Philly Foods. Here the IA gourmet could (and did) sample everything from the indigenous "cheese steaks" (sandwiches), soft pretzels with mustard, and Italian "Hoagies," to the locally manufactured Tasty Kakes, Goldenberg's Peanut Chews, Nabisco cookies and crackers, and Whitman's chocolates, all slobbered down with Ortlief's, Yuengling's, Rolling Rock, and Iron City (Pa. if not Phila.) beers, Chaddsford wines, or Frank's and Champ Cherry sodas. Another local product, Flee's Double Bubble Gum, was available. An introductory illustrated presentation on Phila. IA rounded out the evening.

Early Friday morning IAing began in earnest with six separate, mostly thematic, process tours. For the first time in its annual-conference history, the SIA had to confront head-on the increasing refusal of firms to open their plants to large tours. Reluctantly, and with great difficulty, the planners arranged the six single-bus tours, offered on a first-come, first-served reservation system. The tours were carefully described, well in advance. It was a valiant effort that

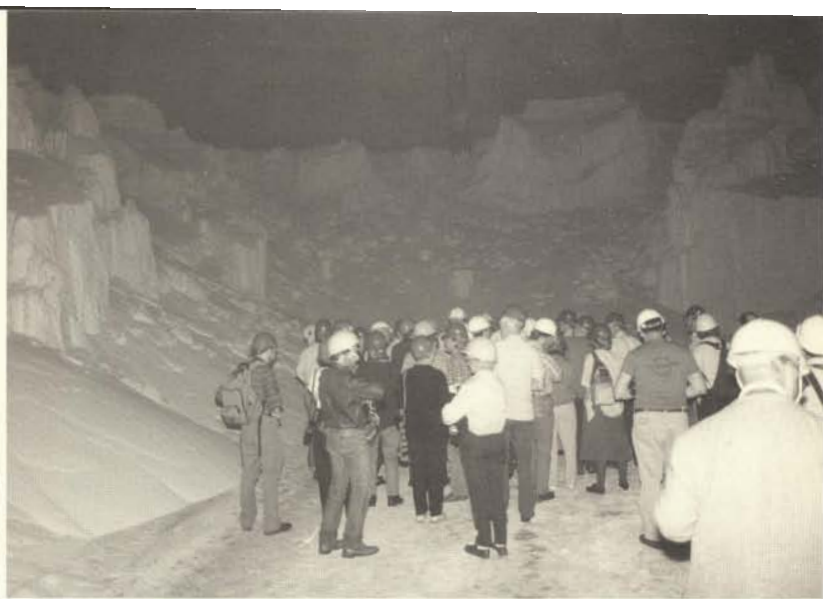


Friday evening reception, tour, and Philly barbeque at the National Historic Landmark Fairmount Water Works (1812-72). *L.A. DeYoung photo.*





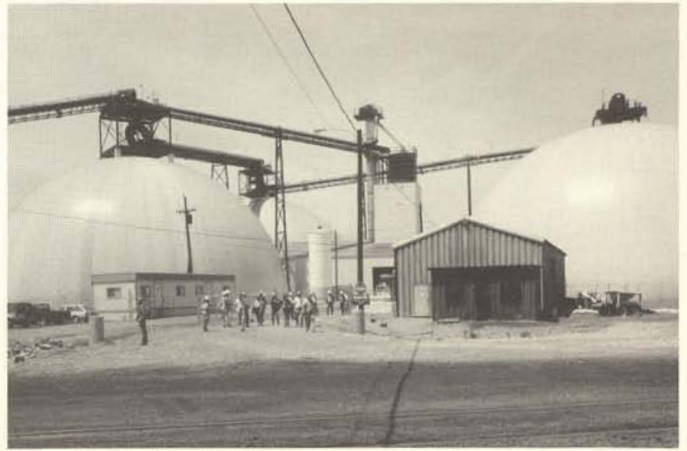
Above: Inside the workshop of the [Samuel] Yellin Metalworkers. C.F. Perez photos.



undoubtedly induced industrial-strength planning headaches, but which turned out surprisingly well.

Tour "A" travelled via the **Market/Frankford Elevated Line** (1904-22) to West and North Philadelphia and Center City, and featured visits to the **Yellin Metalworkers** (in action), the **Reading Terminal Train Shed & Market** (1893), and **Pennsylvania Woven Carpet Mills**, manufacturers of much of the industrial carpeting used in places like airports.

Tour "B" headed northwest and upstream along the Schuylkill River to the mill village of Manayunk, to view the remnants of the 19th-C textile industry on the **Manayunk Canal** (1819). The Manayunk tours included the two surviving spinning mills: **Robert Krook, Inc.**, and **John Wilde & Bro., Inc.**, both producing custom woolen yarn; **Freeland Felt**, a stone post-Civil War mill engaged in needed felt production; **G.J. Littlewood & Sons, Inc.**, a



CONRAIL'S GREENWICH PIERS, Windy Point, Delaware River.

Above: Bulk Import Pier 122 was built c1953 for iron ore, but its four traveling unloaders also serve these Agway storage domes, made of concrete on an inflated bag. The bulk fertilizer inside creates a fantasy landscape. L. DeYoung, R. Frame photos.

Below: Coal Export Pier 124, built in the late 1920s for the PRR and modernized c1980, has two parallel rotary dumpers and a 5,000 ton/hr. traveling shiploader. E.M..Kutsch photo.







Above: Operating the high pressure, stainless-steel dyeing vats at G.J. Littlewood & Sons, Inc., Dyeworks in Manayunk.

Below: An employee explains the equipment at Freeland Felt, where needled felt is made from waste jute. L. Leopold photos.



Below: Clearly, the turnpulls were not operating when we toured the coal unloading facility at Phila. Electric Co.'s Richmond Generating Station (1925). R. Frame photo.



fifth-generation dyeworks; and two heavy-cardboard plants: **Container Corp. of America, Inc.**, and **Connelly Container, Inc.** In continuous operation at the site since 1884, the Wilde firm is the oldest American carpet yarn company in existence.

Visiting west, south, and southwest Phila., Tours "C" and "D" involved many of the same industries and transportation sites, including the **69th St. Terminal & Car Shops of the Market-Frankford Elevated Line**, Southeastern Pa. Trans. Authority; Conrail's **Coal Export Pier No. 124** (1924, 1979) and **Iron Ore Import Pier No. 122** (1956, 1989), both at Windy Point; and the **General Electric Switchgear Plant** (1924). In addition, Tour "D" took a windshield tour of the 793-acre **Phila. Naval Shipyard**; Tour "C" bussed through the **Phila. Refinery of Sun Refining & Marketing Co.**, an SIA process-tour first.

Tour "E" featured textile IA, and went to Frankford, Germantown, and East Falls, with tours of the **Globe Dye Works**, managed by the fifth generation of one of the founders; **Huntingdon Yarn Mill**; **Wayne Mills**, weavers of narrow tapes and now occupying the **New Glen Echo Mills** (1885, 1908). A final stop at the **Phila. College of Textiles & Science** provided an insight into modern computer-controlled textile operations.

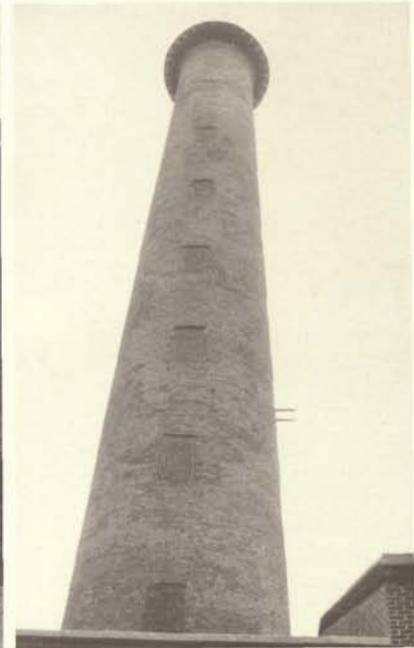
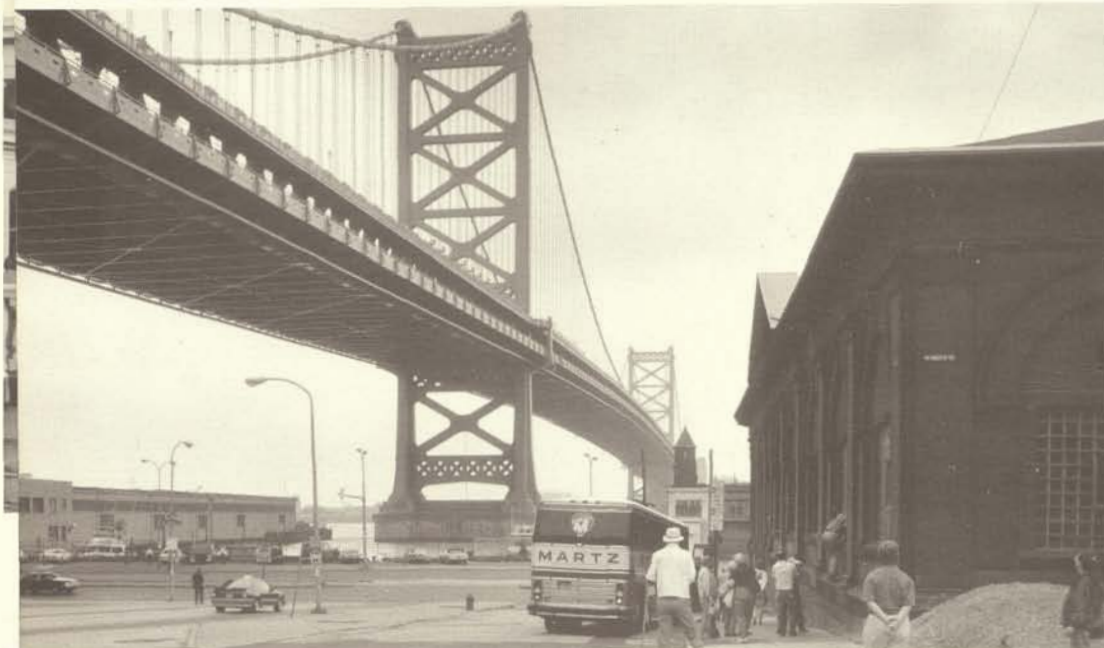
Tour "F" travelled to the Conshohocken and King of Prussia area to tour the **Simpson Paper Co.**; the rolling mill of **Lukens, Inc.**, where women were operating the controls; and the **Phila. Gear Corp.**, which specializes in the design and manufacture of large, high capacity, power-transmission equipment.

Friday concluded with a special barbecue at the **Fairmount Water Works [NHL]**, which was constructed in stages between 1812 and 1872. All were free to wander through the buildings and inspect the *in situ* 1851 Jonval turbine, gear train, and pump. Guides explained the site's history, on-going archeology, and planned "interpretive center." All this was followed by an informal "show & tell" back at the hotel.

On Saturday, the traditional day for scholarly presentations, registrants had the opportunity to hear over 50 papers in

Below left: The 9,570-ft. Benjamin Franklin Bridge (about the only time Ben was mentioned during the conf.) was the world's longest suspension bridge when built in 1921-26. At right is a 1908 high pressure, fire-service station, designed to pump river water into an independent hydrant system.

Below right: Sparks Shot Tower (1808), oldest standing industrial feature in So. Phila. R. Frame photos.







The Oliver Evans Chapter SIA has designed and produced a special Fairmount Water Works pewter belt buckle as a souvenir of the SIA's 19th Annual Conf. in Phila. The image is based on a view embossed on the cover of the 1869 *Annual Report of the Dept. for Supplying the City with Water*, and the back is inscribed: "Fairmount Water Works on the Schuylkill River in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania c. 1858. First large municipal waterworks. Designed by Frederick Graff, Superintendent 1812-1846. Three power systems; steam engines, breast water wheels, Jonval hydraulic turbines. Decommissioned 1911. National Historic Landmark, National Historic Civil Engineering Landmark, National Historic Mechanical Engineering Landmark." The chapter worked with the Phila. Buckle Co. and the Siskiyou Forge to mint the buckle. Avail. for \$22.50 ppd. from Rebecca Shiffer, 1528 Pine St., Phila. PA 19102. Checks to "Oliver Evans Chapter SIA."

four concurrent sessions. The Annual Business Meeting, with unannounced "guest" speaker from Hopewell Furnace, was conducted during the luncheon (see Secretary's Report in "SIA Affairs" section).

Saturday evening was spent dining and dancing aboard the *USS Olympia*, the 1892 protected cruiser that was Admiral Dewey's flagship at the Battle of Manila Bay ("You may fire when you are ready, Gridley") and the sole survivor of the turn-of-the-century "new steel navy." The ship, including the starboard engine room with its triple-expansion engine, was open for inspection, as was the 1945 guppy-class submarine *USS Becuna*, tied up alongside.

Sunday was a very full day of drive-by bus tours, photo opportunities, and walk-throughs, traversing as much of the entire Phila. area as possible. Highlights were **Reading Terminal, Sparks Shot Tower, Benjamin Franklin Bridge, Richmond Generating Station, Disston Saw Works, Frankford Arsenal, Bromley Mills, Budd Co., Midvale Steel, RittenhouseTown, Manayunk Canal & Lower Locks, Falls Bridge, and Strawberry Mansion Bridge.**

All of the foregoing would have been enough—more than enough, in fact—for most three-day conferences. But, there was more. For those who stayed on through Monday, two

special tour options were available: a visit to the wonders of the **Hagley Museum & Library**, Wilmington, Del., or a tour of the fanciful tiled, reinforced-concrete creations of Henry Chapman Mercer in Doylestown: the **Mercer Museum** [1913-16], **Moravian Tile Works** [1911-12, HAER], and Mercer's house, **Fonthill**. For those of us who enjoyed almost five full days of IA in Philadelphia, we concluded the 19th Annual Conference on Monday, exhausted yet utterly satisfied.

## Levis' Hot Dogs & Champ Cherry Soda

To many Philadelphians, Levis' Hot Dogs and Champ Cherry Soda are as much a part of the city's culinary heritage as pepper pot soup, cheese steaks, and soft pretzels. It began in 1895, when Abe Levis started grinding his own frankfurter meat in the basement of his rowhouse on South Sixth St., selling the franks out of his first-floor storefront along with his "champ" (short for "champagne") cherry soda, a cider-flavored drink made from his own formula. The



Levis firm has operated continuously at the original location ever since. The original soda fountain, reportedly the oldest in North American operation, is still used for drawing Champ Cherry soda water. Levis' Champ Cherry Soda was savored as one of the great "Philly Foods" at the 19th Annual SIA Conf.

K.M.C.

### CONFERENCE VIEWS.

*Left:* Conference dynamo Jane Mork Gibson speaking at Fairmount Water Works, a site she made her own. *W.F. Wescott photo.*

*Below left:* Observing a Phila. PCC car, the tour vehicle for Thursday's pre-conf. trip to Germantown. *R. Frame photo.*

*Below right:* Monday's post-conf. tour of the Moravian Pottery & Tile Works [NHL, HAER], Doylestown, a reinforced-concrete tile factory built 1911-16 by the brilliant and eccentric Henry Chapman Mercer. *R. Frame photo.*

