In 1904 Wolf Klebansky bought the house; he was a Russian immigrant born in 1865, he emigrated to the United States in 1885 and became a naturalized American. At the time the neighborhood was no longer as rich as it had been in the past, and many small factories and businesses provided jobs for the growing immigrant population of the area. Klebansky resided in a house located in what is now the garden of the Powell house; this house was demolished in 1932. The Powell House was not a good investment for Klebansky's Russian and Siberian Horse Hair and Bristles importing business, but he used the house as warehouse for the imported goods. After various plans to demolish it, eventually in 1931 he sold the house to the Colonial Dames, who founded the Philadelphia Society for the Preservation of Landmarks and reconstructed the interns.

After it had served for more than one hundred years as upper-class real estate, in 1904 Wolf Klebasky acquired the Powell house and used it as warehouse for his workshop. He sold the rich decorations of the two rooms on the second floor to the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Philadelphia Art Museum. He used the building only for business. How is it possible that such a decorous mansion, once center of the most exclusive social gatherings, became a depot for imported horse fur? During the nineteenth century, the neighborhood changed dramatically: the city became a metropolis; immigration and technology revolutionized society and urban landscape. We invite you to take a journey through the streets of this neighborhood, one of the most elegant parts of the city, to understand how it was once a place of industries, docks, and warehouses, where peoples’ sweat built Philadelphia’s workshop of the world.
6: Bayuk Cigar Factory.
Anna Bartasius worked for the Bayuk Brothers. She was born in Lithuania in 1892 where her parents were farmers. Her brother and sister came in the U.S. first, she arrived in Baltimore in 1912, with instructions and the address of her brother in Philadelphia pinned to her dress. She moved to the city as soon as she could, and immediately found a job in this cigar factory, on the northeast corner of Spruce and 3rd. Interviewed in 1982, she described how it was to work in the cigar industry: “You can always get a job, if not in this factory, then in another factory”. There were hundreds of cigar factories in Philadelphia at the time and despite the competition, the business went well. Bayuk Brothers was one of the biggest companies and expanded its production by acquiring more factories in East Pennsylvania, such as the one that they opened in Steelton, in Lancaster County, where the production of tobacco had a boost after the Spanish war of 1898 and the destruction of a big number of Cuban plantations. Paid for piece and working with fast-paced machines, the employees did not have an easy life, working often under threat: “They give hell to you… you don’t do it right, they fire you anytime” said Anna. Yet piecework and high employment had some advantages: women could take some rest from the smell of their workrooms or they took some time off for their personal time. Anna married in 1913; she had to “run home” to prepare dinner for her family each day. Some colleagues came back to work until nine at the factory to make more money; others raised vegetables and a few chickens in the tiny yards of their homes.

Bayuk Co. thrived and eventually changed its name to “Phillies”, the name of one of their best-selling products. Still one of the most famous cigar companies in the U.S. today, the brand is also part of the art world: the ad of its cigars appears on what arguably could be called the most famous American painting, Hopper’s Nighthawks.

The riverbanks are the oldest part of Philadelphia: today’s appearance is the result of a series of transformations that heavily modified the shape of the docks. The shape and number of piers developed along with the changing city; the large number of relatively small piers of the port of eighteenth and early nineteenth century were inadequate for the industrial metropolis that Philadelphia was becoming after 1860. The big steam ships of the last years of the 1800s required new and bigger piers, which substituted the old ones in the 1920s. On the side of the river between 1834 and 1845 Delaware Avenue, a wide road paved in cobblestone surrounded by warehouses and industries was built. In the subsequent years it was widened to ease the heavy traffic and an elevated train (the Philadelphia Belt Line Railroad) was added in 1908 to connect the subway to the ferries. This elevated rail was destroyed in 1939, when the ferries went out of business because of the Delaware Bridge. The sparse use of the river port called for a redevelopment of the area. After a long series of discussions and polemics, in 1960 a one-mile long area was filled with land. Works and developments limped along the 70s and 80s when eventually in 1986 the Great Plaza (a public open theatre on the shores) was inaugurated. The Korean War Memorial, inaugurated the 22nd of June of 2002, honors the 622 Americans from the counties of Bucks, Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, and Philadelphia who died in combat during the Korean War. The four black granite pillars symbolize the four years of war. The Memorial is the place where Philadelphia celebrates the services for Memorial Day and Veteran Day. The location of the Memorial was once a warehouse/railcar terminal. Foglietta Plaza —where you are— now offers a green and open space. This pleasant place is the result of the Urban Renewal of the 1950s. Society Hill at the time was a poor and violent neighborhood (it was called Bloody Fifth Ward) populated mostly by eastern European immigrants with a small group of African-Americans. Even the market on Dock St. had lost part of its importance when in 1926 the Franklin Bridge —named at the time Delaware bridge— (which connects Philadelphia to New Jersey) put out of business the ferries to Camden that were located on the nearby shores of the Delaware. After the Second World War, when the government began a plan to help cities solve the problem of decaying neighborhoods, Philadelphia started a plan to renovate Society Hill under the direction of Edmund Bacon. The plan aimed to integrate a new architecture with the old colonial past of the area. In 1961 the bulldozers demolished entire blocks, erasing all the buildings that were not part of the Eighteenth Century heritage. The three Society Hill Towers were built on the place where Second St. once stood and two other blocks were filled with modern-looking townhouses. The whole project was finished in 1977.

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