

JUN 12 1985

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only

received AUG 5 1985  
date entered SEP 5 1985

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic SUBURBAN STATION BUILDING

and/or common same

**2. Location**

street & number 1617 John F Kennedy Boulevard N/A not for publication

city, town Philadelphia N/A vicinity of congressional district

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Philadelphia code 101

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: office tower

**4. Owner of Property**

name Suburban Station Associates c/o Richard I Rubin

street & number 1700 Market Street - 28th Floor

city, town Philadelphia N/A vicinity of state PA

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Philadelphia City Hall Records Department

street & number Room 153 City Hall

city, town Philadelphia state Pa

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>    N/A    </u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Suburban Station Building, located at 1617 John F. Kennedy Boulevard, was constructed over the eastern terminus of the Pennsylvania Railroad Line in Philadelphia. The building, a landmark in the city's skyline, opened on September 28, 1930 and remains the city's premier example of the Art Deco style.

An outgrowth of Commercial style architecture, introduced by Louis Sullivan, in the late nineteenth century, Art Deco worked from the basic principles laid down by Sullivan -- a tall columnar structure with a base, a multi-use main floor or floors, as well as an upper story shaft and crowning entablature. His maxims on ornamentation, restricting details to the cornice, spandrel and doorway were retained, as was his emphasis on height, expressed by piers rising upward through the stories and defined by a regular fenestration pattern. Drawing influence from Eliel Saarinen's 1922 design for the Chicago Tribune Building Competition, designed in the Deco style replaced commercial overhanging cornices with a series of setbacks, usually culminating in a pyramidal roofline.

What distinguishes the new design mode the most was the application of sumptuous ornament, color and texture at the base and rooflines. The form of ornament taken derived in part from designs introduced at the Paris 1925 Exposition Internationale des Arts. These designs featured an eclectic array of stylized floral patterns and geometrics including chevrons, circles, zigzags and angles. A variety of materials were employed both for coloring and ornament including metals, brick, stone, glazed terra cotta, tile and glass. Brick was often polychromatic, emphasizing tonality. Faceted, Gothicized detailing was another distinguishing characteristic of Art Deco architecture particularly in the early period of its popularity.

Wholeheartedly embraced in New York, Art Deco style saw rather limited application in Philadelphia. The WCAU Building (1928) at 1620 Chestnut Street, which carried Deco flamboyance and style to the limit was a rare exception. For the most part, Philadelphia Art Deco held to an expressive but hesitant interpretation, retaining Classical overtone in ornamentation.

The choice of the avant-garde Art Deco skyscraper style for the Suburban Station Building was intentional, designed to draw attention to the railroad station, located in the concourse below the building, and by inference, to the eminent position of train transportation in the modern age.

The Suburban Station Building is a free-standing, 21 story office building constructed over a portion of the immense below-grade Penn Center Station. The south, east and west facades are dominated by three story polished black granite entrance portals containing, in each, three sets of bronze doors enhanced with bronze and rose marble surrounds and transom panels. Rising to the height of the second story, above the doors, are glazed, multi-light windows. Along the Boulevard elevation, bronze plaques, with the building named fitted at the top with lamps, flank the entrances. Above the entrance openings are decorative bands of stylized wheat sheaves, incised into the stone. Traces of the original gilded finish still remain. At either end of the carved band are projecting panels; at the center of the main entrance is an illuminated clock with a great bronze flag pole above.

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Continuation sheet SUBURBAN STATION BUILDING

Item number

7

Page

2

Along the Kennedy Boulevard elevation, are large expanses of glass storefronts, framed in decorative bronze, broken occasionally by street entrance doors with square transom panels above. Rose marble panels, since covered with white metal sheets, rest above each of the openings along the four building elevations.

Both the 16th and 17th Street elevations have storefronts flanking an entrance door. The 17th Street bays have been modernized with stainless steel doors and trim, replacing the bronze work. The 16th Street storefronts have had some modifications including modern sign bands. The building name SUBURBAN STATION is spelled out in yellow light bulbs, along this elevation, a later addition to the facade. The Cuthbert Street elevation imitates the ground floor treatment of the other major faces with a polished granite base. Instead of storefronts, large openings with rose marble panels above, have been cut into the taxi area. The rear of the building follows an "E" configuration with the outer arms clad in limestone and terra cotta, the inner arms finished in a light yellow brick. A transwalk connects the Suburban Station Building with the Cigna Building (formerly INA), to the north.

The main body of the building, floors three through sixteen, rise straight from the base. The uniform fenestration pattern of one over one sash are framed by projecting, fluted limestone piers with recessed terra cotta spandrels, on line with the sash. Above the 16th floor, the building begins a series of setbacks with ornamental Art Deco details pressed in limestone and terra cotta, most notably the three story recessed corner bays on floors 17-19. The building steps back again, culminating in a stylized battlemented castle roofline at the 21st floor.

The interior of the building continues the Art Deco styling, particularly in the lobby and ground floor public spaces. The main entrance and elevator lobbies are embellished with color marble in flat and fluted panels, travertine, bronze and rose and Rosso Lavanto marble. A majority of the original fixtures -- chandeliers, lamps, signage and elevator doors remain in place. The upper tenant floors, originally clad with marble wainscoting and wood grained metal doors with transoms, have been largely and often unsympathetically altered to meet tenant demands. The configuration of the elevator lobbies, however, remain largely intact, and two non-modernized elevators retain their original cab finishes.

Two staircases lead from the building's outer lobby area to the Penn Center Station below. As designed by Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, the functions of the train station and the office tower were intentionally separated with all train related activities centralized in the station area. The Suburban Station Building only provided stair access to the station below.

Originally measuring 1,000 feet in length and 200 feet in width, resting 30 feet below street level, the station spanned from 15th Street to 18th Street and from Pennsylvania Boulevard (now John F. Kennedy Boulevard) to Arch Street, well beyond the boundaries of the building envelope. A Philadelphia Inquirer newspaper article, dated September 21, 1930, boasted six acres of concourse and six additional acres of train mezzanine. The commuter traffic could exit the station at 16th and Arch Streets, 16th, 17th and 18th Streets and Pennsylvania Boulevard, 15th Street under the old "Chinese Wall", and at the train and ticket floors at Broad Street, all strategically located north, south, east and west of the actual train areas.

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**Continuation sheet** SUBURBAN STATION BUILDING **Item number** 7

**Page** 3

Subsequent modernizations of train operations has resulted in significant changes in the station's size and appearance. Perhaps the most dramatic alteration was the construction of the Penn Center Complex (1953-1982) which created a pedestrian walkway linking the city's public transportation system with the train system, as well as creating an underground path south to Locust Street. Most recently the creation of the Commuter Tunnel link between Reading Terminal and Penn Center Station has effectively extended the original station to 10th and Market Streets.

The Suburban Station Building represents an important landmark in the built environment of Philadelphia. Not only is it an excellent and sophisticated representation of Art Deco architecture, a style not widely found in its purest form, but is an unusually intact example of the style.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1929-30

Builder/Architect Graham, Anderson, Probst & White

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Joseph Stewart & Co. -- Builders

The Suburban Station Building has achieved a multi-faceted significance as both an architectural masterpiece of the Art Deco style, as designed by the noted Chicago firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, and as a symbol of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company's pre-eminence in local and national rail transportation. Constructed in 1930, for the powerful Pennsylvania Railroad Company, the building constituted one in a succession of imposing twentieth century transportation structures built by the railroad, located in all of the major cities across the country. Situated above an immense underground train station, the largest in the United States at that time, the 21 story building represented an innovative real estate venture which offered tenants modern office spaces in combination with direct commuter service to the site.

### THE PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD COMPANY

Growing from a regional steam powered line, in the early nineteenth century, to the largest railroad in the world, the Pennsylvania Railroad Company played a critical role in the development of the nation, creating an enormous transportation network which unified the diverse parts of the vast American countryside. The Company traces its beginnings to the early 1820's when, in an effort to recover trade lost to the Erie Canal, the newly organized railroad established a rail line between Philadelphia and Columbia, Pennsylvania. Officially chartered in 1846, the company undertook construction of both local and interstate lines in the coming decades. Riding a wave of industrial growth and prosperity in the early twentieth century, the company boasted a system of rail arteries and subsidiary trunk lines, nationwide, which was unsurpassed.

Since its inception, the Pennsylvania Railroad Company asserted a strong presence in the city of Philadelphia, running tracks along the busiest streets of center city. Freight initially comprised a large portion of the company's business with more than 1,000 freight cars serving warehouses, coalyards and depots along the waterfront and up and down Broad Street. However, by the 1860's, the railroad's focus turned increasingly towards expansion of passenger traffic, capturing a stronghold on travel within the city.

The 1880's represented an important period of local growth for the Company as construction of a passenger bridge across the Schuylkill River linked its West Philadelphia lines with center city. The link resulted in a marked increase in

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE ATTACHED SHEET

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .98

Quadrangle name Philadelphia, Pa. - N.J.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UMT References

A 

1	18	4	8	5	0	18	10	4	14	2	12	2	14	10
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Beginning at a point on the north west corner of 16th Street and John F. Kennedy Boulevard, thence west along the north side of said boulevard a distance of 396' to the east side of 17th St.; thence north along 17th St. a distance of 108' to the south side of Cuthbert Street; thence east along said

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state            code            county            code           

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Elizabeth R. Mintz

organization ELIZABETH R. MINTZ date 12/20/84; Rev. 5/1/85

street & number 301 Cherry Street telephone (215) 592-0465

city or town Philadelphia state PA

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

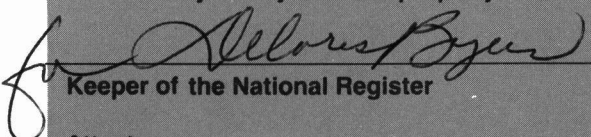
As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer date 2/11/85

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

  
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 9/5/85

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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date entered

Continuation sheet SUBURBAN STATION BUILDING Item number 8 Page 2

passenger traffic along their lines, paving the way for the creation of the Main Line commuter rail lines. The railroad unabashedly hailed their new suburban service capable of joining "every portion of this territory of suburban Philadelphia in direct and frequent communication with the center of the city." The opening of this popular spur eventually led to one of the most comprehensive suburban commuter systems in the country. Fortified by their prospering freight lines, the Pennsylvania Railroad Company helped usher the city into the modern industrial age.

Passenger traffic, both commuter and through, reached a peak between 1920 and 1923, albeit inadequately serviced by Pennsy's North Philadelphia and Broad Street Stations.

In 1923, the Railroad's Board began preparation of plans to properly accommodate local and through passenger service. As a result, it was decided to locate the main passenger station on the west side of the Schuylkill River to create a new underground station in the heart of the city. The Railroad's plans called for a large office tower housing Railroad executive offices as well as commercial office space, conveniently headquartered above the new downtown commuter station. As a result, a commuter could, in effect, ride the train from his or her suburban home directly to the office, located above the station.

THE SUBURBAN STATION BUILDING

Originally known as the Broad Street Suburban Station Building, the structure officially opened on September 28, 1930. This impressive Art Deco skyscraper was designed by the venerable Chicago architectural firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White. The successor firm to the prolific practice of D.H. Burnham & Company, and Graham & Burnham & Company, the firm was noted for their public buildings and large commercial commissions, including several imposing buildings for the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. Among the firm's best known Chicago commissions are the monumental Civic Opera Building (1929), the Merchandise Mart (1930) designed in the "Modern" style and the Art Deco style Field Building (1934). The firm achieved tremendous recognition, in the early part of the twentieth century for their finesse in combining sophisticated architectural design with state of the art building technology. Recognizing this talent, the Pennsylvania Railroad Company commissioned Graham, Anderson, Probst and White to design a series of important building constructed using a variety of styles. These buildings represent some of the most imposing public structures of the period, including Pittsburgh's Union Station (1924) and Philadelphia's 30th Street Station (1930), an interesting amalgam of Beaux Arts and Deco styling.

The Art Deco style, although used in a variety of building types developed almost exclusively as a commercial architectural type. Eliel Saarinen's design for the 1922 Chicago Tribune Building Competition served as a bench mark in the evolution of this style. Thought to be "style-free", Saarinen's design sparked the creative imagination of the architectural community. Dovetailing with the ever increasing popularity of the skyscraper, Art Deco design and soaring office towers soon became integrally linked. The most prevalent feature of this architectural style was its use of ornamentation, texture and color, all achieved by a varied use of materials.

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date entered

Continuation sheet SUBURBAN STATION BUILDING Item number 8

Page 3

Anderson, Probst and White's use of the Art Deco style in the Suburban Station Building expressed their ability to successfully interpret this modern design as well as their keen understanding of the image which the Railroad Company wanted to project. Spanning the length of a city block, the Suburban Station Building became an immediate landmark, as it stood alone on the 1600 block of what was then called Pennsylvania Boulevard. The use of the Art Deco style, called subtle attention to the building, yet its soaring height and sophisticated architectural detail makes the building clearly stand out. The form and detailing of the building expresses a sense of solidness, and dependability, a positive image for the Company, yet it also speaks of sleekness and streamlined finishes--also an appropriate image for those in the business of transporting the public.

Today, the Suburban Station Building is surrounded by recently constructed high rise office towers, the result of an aggressive building boom known as Penn Center. Within this context, the Suburban Station Building is a significant structure, as a reminder of the character of Philadelphia's downtown business district of the early twentieth century. However, the Suburban Station Building must also be evaluated in the large context of the built environment of Philadelphia. With rare exception, this building stands as the city's premier example of Art Deco architecture. In a city which timidly embraced the style, mixing its streamlined looks with the heavier ornamentation of the classical school, the Suburban Station Building offers a rare glimpse at the purer form of this major design style.



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Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

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received  
date entered

Continuation sheet SUBURBAN STATION BUILDING Item number 9

Page 1

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Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, monograph, Volume 11.

"Suburban Station of Pennsylvania Railroad Lines Opens September 28," Philadelphia  
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**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
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received

date entered

Continuation sheet SUBURBAN STATION BUILDING

Item number

10

Page 2

Verbal Boundary Description, continued:

street a distance of 396' to the west side of 16th Street; thence south along said street a distance of 108' to the north side of John F. Kennedy Boulevard and the point of beginning.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REF #  
85001962

Suburban Station Building  
Philadelphia County  
PENNSYLVANIA

Working No. AUG 5 1985  
Fed. Reg. Date: 2-4-86  
Date Due: 9/5/85 9/19/85  
Action:  ACCEPT 9-5-85  
 RETURN  
 REJECT  
Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Entered in the  
National Register

Substantive Review:  sample  request  appeal  NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria \_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_  
Discipline \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: \_\_\_\_\_ technical corrections cited below  
\_\_\_\_\_ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership Public Acquisition	Status Accessible	Present Use
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4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection

---

**8. Significance**

Period      Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates                      Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- applicable criteria
- justification of areas checked
- relating significance to the resource
- context
- relationship of integrity to significance
- justification of exception
- other

---

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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**12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification**

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_\_ state      \_\_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

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**13. Other**

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

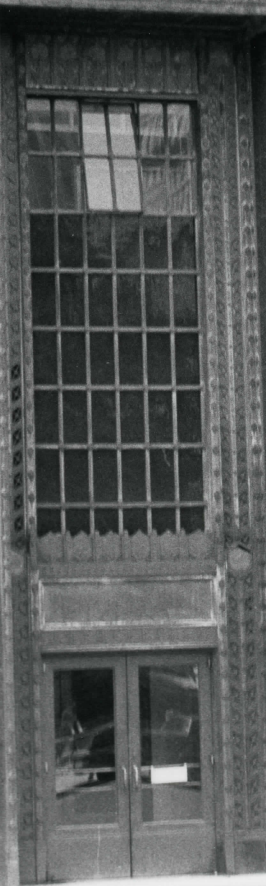
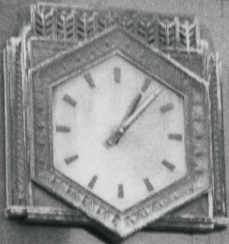
Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD

SUBURBAN

STATION



6

SUBURBAN STATION

Philadelphia County

PD. 1984

PC: Elizabeth R. Mintz

NL: 301 Cherry Street  
Philadelphia, Pa.

PV: Main Entrance Detail - Boulevard  
Elevation



SUBURBAN STATION BUILDING

Philadelphia County

PD: 1984

PC: Elizabeth R. Mintz

NL: 301 Cherry Street  
Philadelphia, Pa.

PV: Main Elevation - JFK Boulevard





SUBURBAN STATION BUILDING

Philadelphia County

PD: 1984

PC: Elizabeth R. Mintz

NL: 301 Cherry Street  
Philadelphia, Pa.

PV: Sixteenth Street Elevation



FFET

BROWNS BUFFET

FIRST  
FEDERAL  
SAVINGS  
OF PHILA.

DETROIT, MICHIGAN

SUBURBAN STATION BUILDING

Philadelphia County

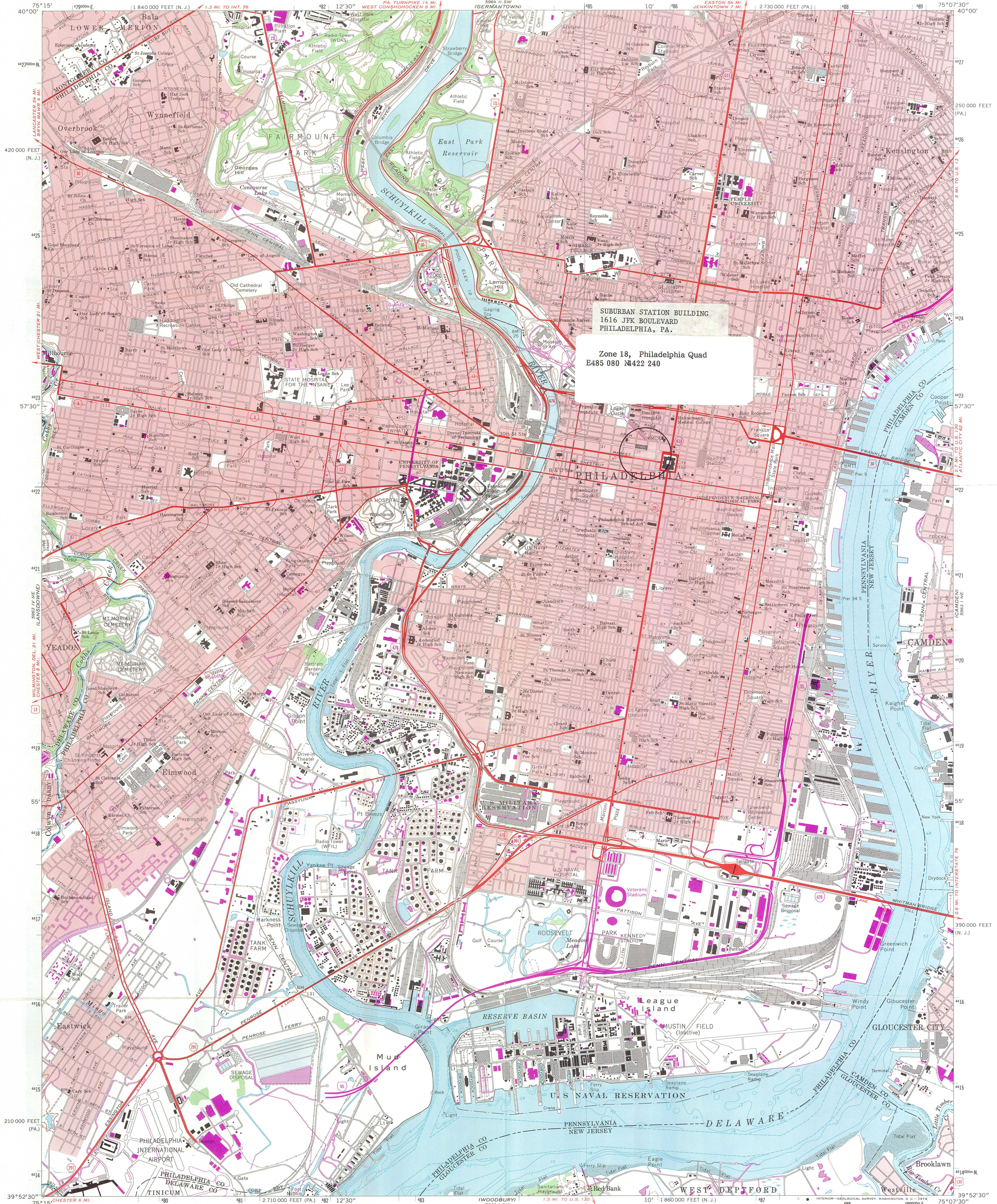
PD: 1984

PC: Elizabeth R. Mintz

NL: 301 Cherry Street

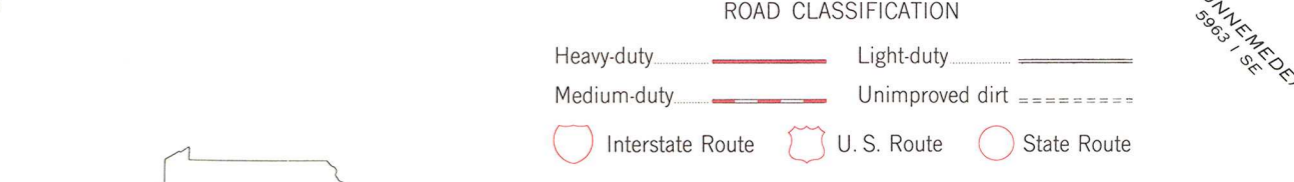
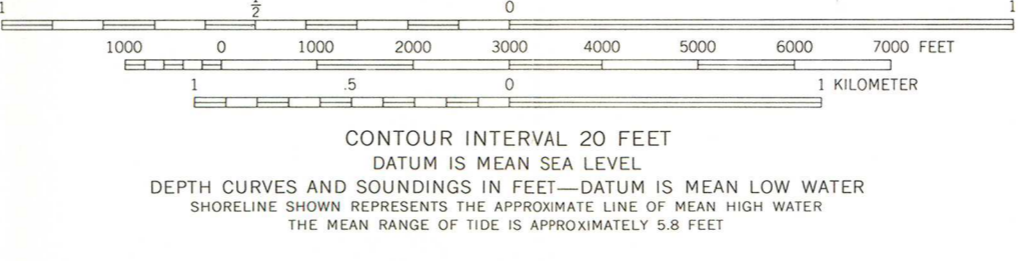
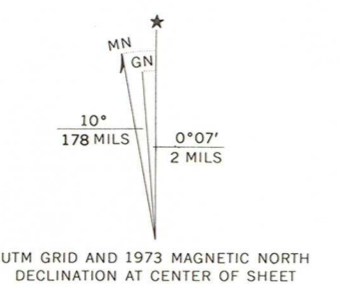
Philadelphia, Pa.

PV: Main Elevation - Storefront Detail



SUBURBAN STATION BUILDING  
1616 JFK BOULEVARD  
PHILADELPHIA, PA.  
Zone 18, Philadelphia Quad  
E485 080 N422 240

Mapped by the U. S. Coast & Geodetic Survey  
Edited and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and USCE  
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs  
taken 1946. Topography by planimetric surveys 1947. Revised by  
the Geological Survey from aerial photographs taken 1965. Field  
checked 1967  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Chart 280 (1967)  
This information is not intended for navigational purposes  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grids based on Pennsylvania coordinate system, south zone,  
and New Jersey coordinate system  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 18,  
shown in blue  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Revisions shown in purple compiled by the Geological Survey from  
aerial photographs taken 1973. This information not field checked

PHILADELPHIA, PA.—N. J.  
N3952.5—W7507.57.5  
1967  
PHOTOREVISED 1973  
AMS 5963 1 NW—SERIES V831

J. L. SMITH CO.—MAPS  
2104 WALNUT ST., PHILA., PA. 19103