

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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NOV 24 1987

date entered

JAN 7 1988

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Center City West Commercial Historic District

and or common N/A

2. Location

Chestnut St., 15th to 21st, Moravian, Sansom, and Walnut
street & number Sts., 15th to 18th, portions of 15th-20th Sts. N/A not for publication

city, town Philadelphia N/A vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code 042 county Philadelphia code 101

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple

street & number

city, town N/A vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number Broad and Market Streets

city, town Philadelphia state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Pennsylvania Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate 1980 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

7. Description

Condition

☒ excellent
☐ good
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated
☐ ruins
☐ unexposed

Check one

☐ unaltered
☒ altered

Check one

☒ original site
☐ moved

date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Center City West Commercial Historic District is bounded on the east by 15th Street, on the north by the rear property lines of the buildings facing Chestnut Street between 15th and 16th Streets, by Chestnut Street between 16th Street and 1721 Chestnut Street, and by the rear property lines of the buildings facing Chestnut Street between 1721 Chestnut Street and 21st Street, on the west by 21st Street, and by an irregular boundary south of Chestnut Street between 21st and 18th Streets and south of Walnut Street between 18th and 16th Streets. The Broad Street Historic District (National Register) shares a common boundary of 15th Street; the Rittenhouse Historic District (National Register) encompasses much of the area south and west of the proposed district.

The district contains 249 buildings, of which 210 or 84% are considered to be contributing to the significance of the district and 39 or 16% are non-contributing structures. Many of the contributing buildings are regarded as significant in that they best illustrate the themes of the district. All buildings listed as contributing illustrate the district's historical and architectural significance. Nine buildings within the district are already listed upon the National Register: the WCAU Building (1618-1622 Chestnut Street), Oliver H. Bair Funeral Home (1818-1820 Chestnut Street), the Belgravia Hotel (1811-17 Chestnut Street), the Joseph Solomon Houses (130-132 S. 17th Street), 1608 Walnut Street Building (1608-1614 Walnut Street), Sun Oil Building (1616-1626 Walnut Street), the Allman Building (1701 Walnut Street), and the Racquet Club (215 S. 16th Street).

The unifying nature of this area is its early-20th-century commercial character. The scale of the buildings, predominately between two and four stories, decreases from east to west. The eastern part of the district between 15th and 18th Streets contains many multi-story office buildings erected between 1895 and 1935, similar in design and purpose with much of the Broad Street Historic District (National Register). However, interspersed between these large edifices stand many 2-4 story banks and other structures constructed and/or remodeled expressly for commercial purposes during the same period. As one travels west towards 21st Street, these smaller commercial buildings dominate with an occasional office tower or similar large structure highlighting the skyline. Many of these smaller buildings stand as survivors of an older residential district, originally part of Rittenhouse, which has been converted into the present commercial area. In many cases, the Victorian facades have been replaced, either partially or in toto, with limestone, cast stone or granite Neo-classical, Art Deco and Art Moderne designs or brick Georgian/Federal styles.

The range of styles within the proposed district encompasses a one hundred-year period from simple vernacular Greek Revival groups of houses erected in the 1830s and 1850s, through the various Victorian and Edwardian stages of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and finally becoming a showplace of the Art Deco and Art Moderne of the 1920s and 1930s.

Many examples of the early styles stand within the western part of the district along Chestnut Street between 18th and 21st Street. In the post-Civil War period, the area, along with Rittenhouse, became home to many prominent and affluent Philadelphians who built their city houses here from the designs of many noteworthy local architects. The Victorian Gothic was used by such architects as Frank Furness and George W. Hewitt in their creations at 130-132 S. 17th Street and 124-126 S. 16th Street, respectively. Other late Victorian styles were used by Willis Hale for the Grebble Estate Stores at 1708-1710 Chestnut Street, Addison Hutton for the M.E. Bonshur House at 1533 Chestnut Street, and J. Stuckert & Son for the Teller & Brother Stores at 1835 Chestnut Street. By the turn of the century, many houses were designed in

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the Jacobethan style (2047 Chestnut Street, Wilson Eyre, architect; 1509 Walnut Street, Newman, Woodman & Harris, architects) or in the various forms of the Colonial and Georgian Revivals (2049 Chestnut Street).

The tall office building made its appearance within the district in the late 19th century, using a variety of styles. The Wilson Brothers designed the Classical Commercial-style Physicians and Dentists' Building at 1831 Chestnut Street in 1896 and H.L.A. Jeckel Company designed a Beaux Arts tower at 1501-1515 Chestnut Street in 1902-1903. At the opposite end of that block, Wilson Brothers and Company were also engaged in the design of the Georgian-derived store and office tower at 1530-1534 Chestnut Street (later Bailey, Banks & Biddle Building) in the same year. Despite these early towers on Chestnut Street, Walnut Street became the site for most of the office towers within the district. Herbert D. Allman hired Baker & Dallett in 1910 to plan the Allman Building at 1701 Walnut Street in a Commercial Style. In 1916, Charles Oelschläger designed the Classical-inspired Medical Arts Building at 1601 Walnut Street (and added a matching addition to 1603-1605 Walnut Street in 1924).

The majority of these towers were erected in the 1920s in various Art Deco styles including the Ritter & Shay-designed 1500 Walnut Street (1927), Green & Lavelle's 1524-1530 Walnut Street (1928), Tilden, Register & Pepper's designs for Joseph J. Greenberg at 1608-1614 and 1616-1626 Walnut Street (1928-1930), and two towers designed by LeRoy B. Rothschild at 1600-1602 Walnut Street (1922-1923) and 1700 Walnut Street (1925). Around the intersection of 17th and Chestnut Streets, two other notable towers appeared in the late 1920s: Rankin & Kellogg's Georgian Revival design for the Provident Trust Company at 1632-1636 Chestnut Street (1927), and the Art Deco Architects' Building at 17th and Sansom Streets (1929-1930) designed by a coalition of major Philadelphia architectural firms.

Despite the commanding presence of these towers, the overall architectural character of the district is marked by the small two, three and four-story commercial structures erected during the first forty years of the 20th century and especially those appearing in the 1920s and 1930s. John T. Windrim's Renaissance Revival design for Oliver H. Bair's funeral home in 1907-1909 (1818-1820 Chestnut Street) continued the tradition of low-scale commercial buildings started in the late 19th century along Chestnut Street. The increasing appearance of banking houses within the district necessitated new buildings for their use. Designed in Classical styles, these buildings had limestone, cast stone and/or granite fronts indicating their solidity. Excellent examples stand at 1511 Walnut Street (1920-21, Stewardson & Page, architects), 1513 Walnut Street (1929, Grant M. Simon), 1529-1533 Walnut Street (1926, LeRoy B. Rothschild), and 1535 Locust Street (1928, Zantzinger, Borie & Medary).

On Chestnut Street particularly, a new generation of buildings was erected in the 1920s and 1930s. Building permits indicate that the building line along Chestnut Street was moved back in the early 1920s. Although no official confirmation has been uncovered, this sparked a new building and refacading boom along Chestnut Street west of Broad Street identical to one which occurred in 1892 in the 700 block of Chestnut Street when that block was widened. Although the widening was never carried out, many property owners, anticipating this move, hired architects to either design new buildings or, more commonly, design alterations which entailed removing the existing facade and several feet of the front of the building, and placing a new facade on the edifice. Typical examples of this work include 1802 Chestnut Street (Zantzinger, Borie & Medary, architects for alterations), 1804 Chestnut Street (Savery & Scheetz, architects), and 1921, 2015 and 2030 Chestnut Street (David Supowitz, architect). Most of these buildings were clad in stone fronts designed in Art Deco and Art Moderne styles. Since many buildings were not replaced or refacaded, an uneven building line presently exists on Chestnut Street between 18th and 21st Streets.

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The Art Deco and Art Moderne styles became the prevalent style for commercial architecture of the 1920s and 1930s. Architects such as LeRoy B. Rothschild, Frank E. Hahn, Abraham Levy, and David Supowitz specialized in the design of small commercial establishments during this period. In addition to the refacing mentioned above, many new buildings of these styles appeared to grace the district, including 1608-1612, 1626, 1812-1814, 1900-1902, and 2000 Chestnut Street and several buildings at the southeast corner of 17th and Walnut Streets.

Generally, changes occurring to these buildings after 1941 have been confined to replacement of the first floor storefronts. Some new buildings, i.e. the Elgin Parking Garage at 15th and Sansom Streets, have appeared. Full refacades of existing structures have also occurred to some buildings. However, these few changes do not adversely affect the overall appearance and integrity of the district, and a trend has begun to restore the magnificence of the full design of many of the early 20th-century commercial buildings.

Most of the non-contributing buildings within the district fall into two categories: full modern refacades of earlier buildings and new buildings. These are situated throughout the district. Many of them are commercial establishments and do not adversely intrude into the overall appearance or character of the Center City West Commercial Historic District. In fact, several represent excellent examples of modern architecture and should be re-evaluated in terms of their importance to the district when they reach fifty years of age.

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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1830–1941 **Builder/Architect** various

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Center City West Commercial Historic District represents Philadelphia's upscale commercial core of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, one which predominantly catered to the carriage trade of residential Rittenhouse to the south and supplemented the business corridor of Broad Street to the east. Formerly part of the fashionable Rittenhouse neighborhood, Walnut and Chestnut Streets west of Broad evolved into an area of retail, banking, and the professions. This transformation changed the streetscape from one of townhouses, churches, libraries, and schools to low-rise and high-rise retail and office buildings. Rich in commercial history, the proposed district conveys a distinct heritage and adds an important component to the broader understanding of Philadelphia's history. In conjunction with the district's commercial significance is its architecture that displays both individual landmarks and the city's most outstanding and densely concentrated ensemble of Art Deco and Art Moderne commercial architecture. Composed of commissions representing Philadelphia's well-established firms and a new generation of architects, as well as non-architect designed buildings, this assemblage continues to project the ongoing vitality and commercial history of this Center City district.

Unlike the East Center City Commercial district which grew as an extension to the original 17th and 18th-century commercial core, West Center City remained virtually undeveloped into the second quarter of the 19th century. Until then, the land west of Broad Street was an underdeveloped urban fringe comprised of open fields, pastures, clay pits, scattered clusters of housing and industry, and wharves along the Schuylkill River. The first significant phase of construction west of Broad Street, essentially residential, occurred in the 1830s. This resulted from development pressures upon residential properties east of Broad to make way for the city's expanding business district.¹ Center City west of Broad soon became an acceptable and fashionable address for the city's upper and middle classes. Chestnut, Walnut, and Spruce Streets, like Washington Square West in the previous generation, were quickly built up with rows of speculative rowhouses, interspersed with large free standing town dwellings, cultural institutions, and churches serving the newly arrived residents. The area followed the development patterns of London's fashionable west end though more modest in scale than its English counterpart. Philadelphia's upper and middle classes brought their prestigious architects west of Broad including John Haviland who designed the 1830s Colonnade Row at 15th and Chestnut and the Blight houses at 16th and Chestnut. In 1834 Thomas U. Walter designed the porticoed Epiphany Episcopal Church opposite Colonnade Row for a congregation largely formed from St. Stephen's at 10th near Chestnut. Another church following its congregation west of Broad was the Ninth Presbyterian Church, which relocated to 16th and Sansom in 1841. Joining the residences and churches was the city's oldest free library, the City Institute, built at 18th and Chestnut in 1854.

Chestnut and Walnut Streets developed rapidly during the mid-19th century; the 1862 Bonsall and Smedley atlas depicts dense settlement as far west as 20th Street. Although the area west of Broad underwent a significant growth period between 1850 and 1875, the nature of the proposed district at that time would still be characterized as residential. However, an important impetus for commercial development west of Broad occurred in 1870 when the city council voted to relocate the City Hall from its site at 5th and Chestnut to the Center Square located at the intersection of Broad and Market Streets. This event "radically altered the locational patterns of many core activities."² As a result, the last quarter of the nineteenth century began to witness the gravitation of existing businesses west towards or beyond Broad Street and the establishment of new shops and offices within the residential district along west Chestnut Street, many in adapted residences. As would be expected, this commercial development began at the blocks closest to Broad Street, then

9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 332.35

Quadrangle name Philadelphia

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

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4	8	5	8	0	5
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4	4	2	2	1	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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1	8
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4	8	5	7	5	5
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4	4	2	1	8	1	0
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Zone Easting Northing

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1	8
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4	8	4	9	7	5
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4	4	2	2	2	1	0
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1	8
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4	4	2	0	3	0	0
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Verbal boundary description and justification

see attached 1":200' scale map and continuation sheet

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carol A. Benenson, M.S., and Jefferson M. Moak

organization Killinger Kise Franks Straw (KKFS)

date September 28, 1987

street & number 1316 Arch Street

telephone (215) 561-1050

city or town Philadelphia

state Pennsylvania

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Brent D. Glass

title Brent D. Glass, State Historic Preservation Officer

date 11-17-87

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

Linda McClelland
Keeper of the National Register

date 1/7/88

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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disseminated westward. In the early 1880s, the 1500 and 1600 blocks of Chestnut boasted numerous dentists, opticians, druggists, dressmakers, milliners, tailors, and upholsterers. In the last quarter of the nineteenth century these retail and service businesses had a nearby clientele in Rittenhouse, the city's southwest quad that contained the wealthiest sector of its population. In addition to these enterprises, the 1500-1700 blocks of Chestnut were the address of several schools and academies that also catered to Rittenhouse in the 1880s: Philadelphia Cooking School (1518), Normal Art School (1523), School of Art Needlework (1602), West Chestnut Street Seminary (1707), and Pennsylvania Academy of Industrial Art (1709).

During the period 1900-1941, Center City West underwent its most intensive transformation into an upscale retail district. Just as the 1870 site selection for the new City Hall had begun to influence land use patterns in the 1880s, so too did developments in the railroad systems of the '80s and '90s help to shape the turn-of-the-century and twentieth-century profile of the district. In 1881 the Pennsylvania Railroad opened its downtown station on the west side of Center Square opposite the new city hall. Primarily a freight depot, the station encouraged the growth of freight-related businesses such as warehousing along Market Street where the "Chinese Wall", a seven-block long, half-block wide mammoth granite wall for the elevated tracks to 30th Street forced the retail and service establishments to locate along Chestnut Street. By the 1890s, the Pennsylvania Railroad decided to enlarge the Broad Street Station to accommodate increased passenger volume. According to historian Richard Webster, "the greatest commercial development west of Broad Street coincided with the Station's enlargement in 1892-94."³ During this era, Center City West witnessed construction of new commercial and office buildings such as Willis G. Hale's 10-story building for William Weightman at 1524-26 Chestnut Street (1896); Addison Hutton's Beaux Arts-Style Bonschur Building at 1533 Chestnut (1898); and the Wilson Brothers & Company's 8-story Georgian Revival office tower for Perry and Company at 16th and Chestnut (1902).

The path of commercial growth extended westward towards 21st Street with a peak of construction activity during the 1920s, largely in the form of new facades for fashion-conscious stores. Clustered within the district during this period of significance were men's and women's clothiers, milliners, furriers, dressmakers, beauty parlors, and decorators, clearly stores that catered to a customer of the socio-economic status of Rittenhouse. Businesses which had been serving generations of Philadelphia's elite relocated west from Center City East during the early twentieth century. Samuel Freeman's pretigious auction house crossed Broad Street to 1519-21 Chestnut by 1910, then to 1808-10 Chestnut Street in 1924, and Bonwit Teller left its 1300 Chestnut Street address for 1700 Chestnut in 1927. In addition to the Rittenhouse carriage trade patron, it is worth noting that the Pennsylvania Railroad, which serviced the rapidly developing upper class Main Line suburbs, transported shoppers and commuters to the commercial district west of Broad whereas the Reading Railroad, whose lines ran to the northern and northwestern middle class suburbs, had its station near the major department stores east of Broad. While the shops catered to the retail patrons, the office towers housed dentists, physicians, and optometrists, as well as lawyers who remained relatively close to Broad Street's business activity. Also gracing the Chestnut streetscape as of the 1920s were several movie palaces including the Boyd (1908-16 Chestnut) and the Aldine (1828 Chestnut) whose movies were a chic novelty at the time. This is in marked contrast to the entertainment east of Broad and along Broad, where legitimate theatre was the rule.

While the Chestnut Street silhouette rapidly changed from imposing Greek Revival and Victorian townhouses to new commercial buildings and office towers in the first decades of the 20th century, Walnut Street retained its 19th-century scale and character well into the 1920s. The eventual transformation of Walnut Street into part of the commercial downtown in the 1920s can be attributed to several factors. First, it became a logical extension of the Chestnut Street corridor as the emergence of high-rise office

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buildings along Broad Street increased the demand for retail and support services. Moreover, Walnut Street became the strategic area for construction of office buildings that would be in close proximity to the major downtown business core. Developer Joseph J. Greenberg's late-1920s Art Deco office towers at 1608-14 and 1616-26 Walnut, both designed by Tilden Register and Pepper, demonstrate this trend. Second, Walnut Street as well as Chestnut Street responded to the accelerated population growth of Rittenhouse Square in the 1920s as the single family townhouses were razed for fashionable high-rise apartment buildings, and to the citywide clientele given access to the downtown via subway and surface streetcar lines.

Walnut Street west of Broad also evolved into the city's financial district in the '20s. At least 23 banks and investment securities brokers located on the 1500 and 1600 blocks by 1929. Many of these, including Brown Brothers, Harriman & Company, Bioren & Company, and West & Company, moved to Walnut Street from the old financial district at 3rd and Chestnut. This westward movement of financial institutions towards the businesses near Broad Street began in 1890 when the Girard Trust Company made its move to Chestnut and Broad, then logically extended further west where more space was available yet close to Broad Street. The relocation of the Philadelphia Stock Exchange from William Strickland's Merchants Exchange Building at 3rd and Walnut to the 1400 block of Walnut in 1912 set the stage for the investment brokers to follow in the 1920s. And, the change in federal banking regulations passed as the McFadden Act of 1925 enabled national banks to establish branches in the city where they were located, which explains the presence of branch banks west of Broad, such as the one for the Corn Exchange National Bank.

Architecturally, the Center City West Commercial Historic District serves as a visual document of a commercial corridor that constantly has been evolving and adapting to fashion and necessity for more than a century. This ongoing change explains the typical streetscape which displays a heterogeneous mix of Victorian, Colonial Revival, Neo-classical, Art Deco, Art Moderne, and modern buildings and shopfronts, some layered upon earlier structures. Among these streetscapes, the district boasts several exceptional buildings individually listed in the National Register, all of which are the works of prominent architects. These include The Belgavia at 1811-17 Chestnut Street (Milligan and Webber, 1902), 1608 and 1616 Walnut (Tilden Register & Pepper, 1928), the Racquet Club at 215 S. 16th (Horace Trumbauer, 1905-1907), and the Allman Building at 1701 Walnut (Baker and Dallet, 1910). The presence of the city's best known architectural firms is also seen elsewhere in the district: Wilson Eyre, Jr.'s Jacobean Gothic design for the Patterson House at 2047 Chestnut (1901); Rankin & Kellogg's Provident Trust Company Building at 1632-1636 Chestnut (1927), and the Wilson Brothers' Physicians & Dentists' Building at 1831 Chestnut (1896) and 8-story office building at 1530 Chestnut (1902). Also of importance are Ritter and Shay for their office tower at 1500 Walnut (1925), Hoffman-Henon Company's Pennsylvania Building at 1500 Chestnut (1923) and office building at 1600 Chestnut (1925), and William Steele and Sons' Aldine Theatre at 1826 Chestnut (1921) and Jackson and Moyer Store at 1610 Chestnut (1927).

Of interest to this district is a group of 1920s architects, most of whom attended the University of Pennsylvania in the 1910s: LeRoy B. Rothschild, Frank E. Hahn, Edwin L. Rothschild, Edwin Hirsch Silverman, Abraham Levy, Stanley K. Neubauer, and David Supowitz. In addition to their academic education, they received professional training in the city's prominent architectural firms: L. Rothschild with Price and McLanahan, Silverman with Horace Trumbauer and the Hoffman-Henon Company, and Supowitz with John T. Windrim. As a group, they represent the ascension and acceptance of the Jewish architect into the profession in Philadelphia. What makes them most important to this district, however, is their distinct and laudable contribution to the architecture of the Chestnut and Walnut streetscapes. Working individually and in partnerships, these men designed the numerous cast stone clad Art Deco and Art Moderne buildings that give the Center City West Commercial district a unique identity. The concentration of buildings such as Hahn's 1900 Chestnut Street (1934), Rothschild's 1901 Chestnut (1922) and 2001 Chestnut (1927), and Silverman and Levy's 1722-24 Chestnut (1930) and 2006 Chestnut (1928)

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provide the district with a major component of its character defining feature. In addition to these Art Deco and Art Moderne buildings, this group and specifically Rothschild, made other contributions to Center City West's commercial skyline. Rothschild designed the office buildings at 1700 Walnut (1925) and 1529 Walnut (1926), both in the Neo-classical style. The quantity of their works - - L. Rothschild (11), Hahn (13), and Silverman and Levy (5) - - clearly attests to their contribution in shaping the Center City West Commercial district in the 20th century.

The overall collection of buildings in Center City West displays the City's most concentrated and impressive assemblage of Art Deco and Art Moderne architecture dating from the 1920s and '30s, along with the mix of late Victorian and early 20th-century revival styles and the beginnings of the International style in the late 1930s. In addition to the low-rise commercial buildings of the above-referenced architects, which include several works erected in the 1930s (1520-22 Chestnut Street, 1625 Walnut Street, and 1630 and 1632 Walnut Street), the district contains several Art Deco towers such as 1608 and 1616 Walnut Street (1928-30), 1528 Walnut Street (1928), and the WCAU building at 1618-22 Chestnut Street (1932) that give this part of Philadelphia a unique architectural identity as the city's twentieth century commercial downtown. This architectural and commercial identity extends into the late 1930s and early '40s, a reflection of the evolutionary nature of commercial districts. Representative of this ongoing trend are D. Everett Waid's building for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company at 1535-37 Chestnut (1936); Tilden and Pepper's office tower at 1619-23 Walnut (begun 1937); and Thalheimer & Weitz's store for Jacobs Brothers at 1718 Chestnut (begun 1939).

In summary, Chestnut and Walnut Streets west of Broad represent an important and distinct component in Philadelphia's commercial history. As an area of commercial activity, the district documents the emergence of a prestigious 20th-century retail and business core from a 19th-century residential neighborhood. Within its streetscapes, it displays the generations of shopfronts and facades that mark this transition and the ongoing change and vitality that characterize commercial districts. Despite some modern construction, demolition, and alterations, the district continues to convey a time and place in the city's history. As architecture, the district stands as an ensemble of primarily 20th-century commercial design reflective of the city's renown and lesser-known architects. Giving it particular importance within the realm of architecture is its collection of Art Deco and Art Moderne commercial buildings, which stands as the best assemblage of this style and type in Philadelphia. Because the Center City West Commercial Historic District possesses this commercial and architectural significance, it warrants listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Footnotes:

1. Bobbye Burke, Otto Sperr, Hugh J. McCauley, and Trina Vaux, Historic Rittenhouse (Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), p. 9.
2. Jeffrey P. Roberts, "Railroads and the Downtown: Philadelphia, 1830-1900," in The Divided Metropolis, edited by William W. Cutler, III, and Howard Gillette, Jr. (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1980), p. 37.
3. Richard Webster, Philadelphia Preserved (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1976), p. 115.

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

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

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Continuation sheet Center City West Commercial
Historic District Item number 9 Page 3

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

**National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet Center City West Commercial Item number 10 Page 2
 Historic District

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary for the Center City West Commercial Historic District encompasses the core of late-19th and early-20th-century commercial buildings along Chestnut and Walnut Streets. The boundary is also intended to be compatible with boundary edges of surrounding National Register historic districts: Broad Street to the east and Rittenhouse to the west and south (where a pending CLG district nomination will extend the National Register Rittenhouse boundary, thereby meeting the proposed Center City West boundary). The northern boundary of the Center City West Commercial Historic District generally follows the rear property lines of the north side of Chestnut Street, the area north of which is characterized by the modern office towers of Market Street. The exception to this boundary is the omission of the north side of the 1600 block and half of the 1700 block of Chestnut Street where demolition and substantial modern construction justified their exclusion from the district.

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

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

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date entered

Continuation sheet Center City West Commercial
Historic District Item number Photographs Page 1

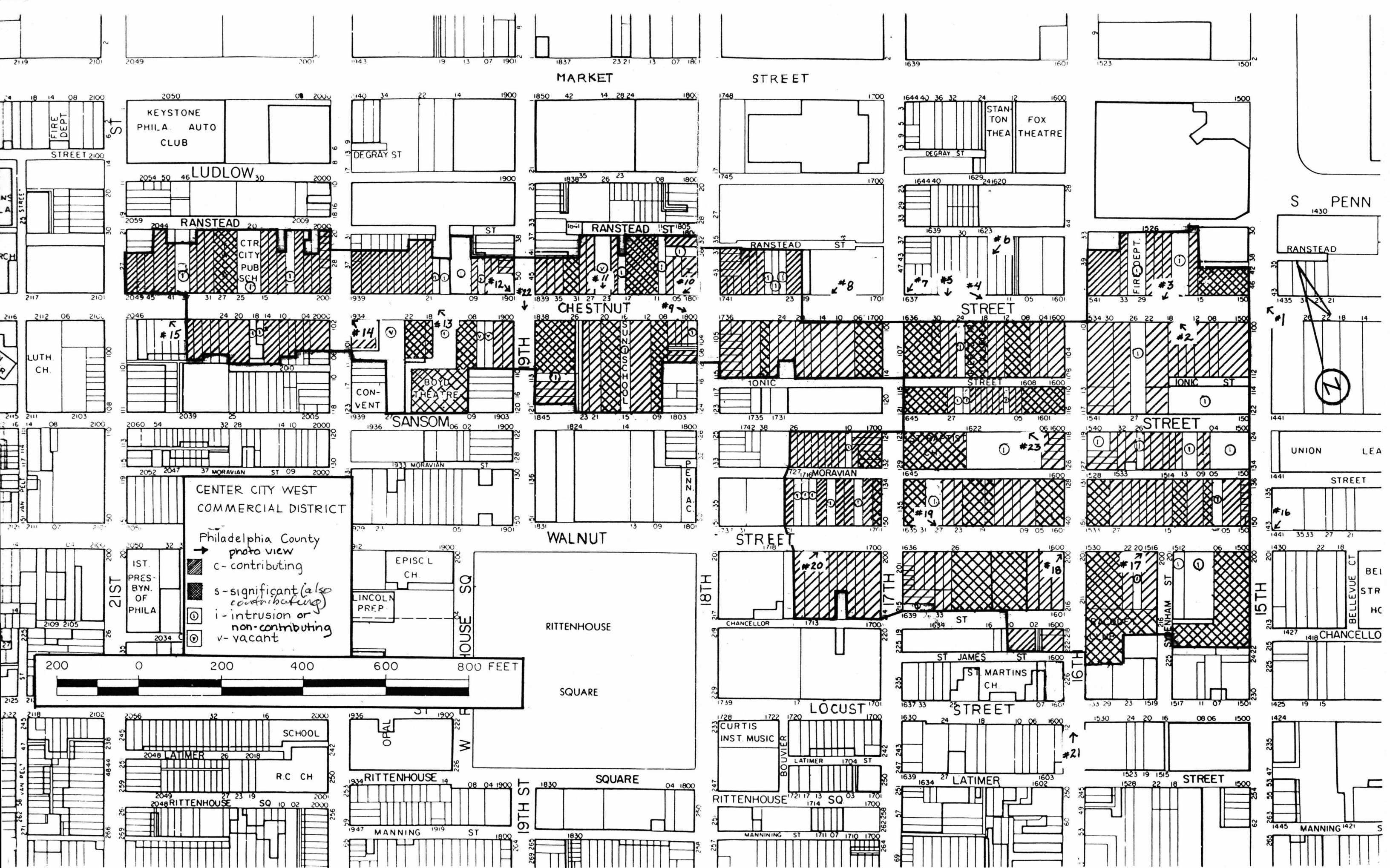
PHOTOGRAPHIC IDENTIFICATION

Note: This information applies to all photographs.

Center City West Commercial Historic District
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Photographer: Mark A. Bower
Date: July 1987
Negative location: KKFS

Views:

1. Pennsylvania Building, 1501-15 Chestnut, looking NW
2. 1523-27 Chestnut Street, looking NW
3. 1520-22 Chestnut Street, looking SW
4. 1600 block of Chestnut Street, south side, looking SE
5. 1626-28 Chestnut Street, looking south
6. 1600 block Chestnut Street, south side, looking SW
7. 1700 Chestnut Street (Bonwit Teller & Co.), looking SW
8. 1716-24 Chestnut Street, looking SW
9. 1700 block Chestnut Street, south side, looking SE from 18th St.
10. 1800 block Chestnut Street, south side, looking SW
11. 1818-20 (Oliver H. Bair Funeral Home), 1822-24 Chestnut Street, looking south
12. SEC 19th and Chestnut (Aldine Theatre), looking SE
13. 1921-23 Chestnut Street, looking NW
14. 2001 Chestnut Street, looking NW
15. 2043-49 Chestnut Street, looking NW
16. 1500 Walnut Street, looking SW
17. 1500 block Walnut, north side, looking NE
18. 1531 Walnut Street (Brown Bros., Harriman & Co.), looking NE
19. 1600 block Walnut Street, south side, looking SE
20. 1700 block Walnut Street, north side, looking NE
21. S. 16th Street at Locust, looking north
22. S. 19th Street at Chestnut, looking south
23. 1600 block Sansom Street, north side, looking NW



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Center City West Commercial Historic District
Philadelphia County
PENNSYLVANIA

~~Substantive Review~~

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

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal

Reviewer's comments:

Working No. NOV 24 1981
Fed. Reg. Date: 2/7/89
Date Due: 12/24/87 - 1/8/88
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 1-7-88
☐ RETURN
☐ REJECT
Federal Agency: _____

Recom./Criteria ATC Accept
Reviewer J. McDelland
Discipline A. Hist
Date 1/3/88
____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: _____ technical corrections cited below
_____ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

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"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	
	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	
	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	

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

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

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

13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: _____

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



Center City West Commercial District

Photo* 1

Center City West Commercial District

Photo* 1



Center City West Commercial District

Photo*2

Center City West Commercial District

Photo*2



Center City West Commercial District

Photo # 3

Center City West Commercial District

Photo # 3



Center City West Commercial District

Photo# 4

Center City West Commercial District

Photo# 4



Center City West Commercial District

Photo*5

Center City West Commercial District

Photo*5



Center City West Commercial District

Photo*6

Center City West Commercial District

Photo*6



Center City West Commercial District

Photo# 7

Center City West Commercial District

Photo# 7



Center City West Commercial District

Photo# 8

Center City West Commercial District

Photo# 8



Center City West Commercial District

Photo# 9

Center City West Commercial District

Photo# 9



1802
EDWARD G. WILSON
Antiques

1802
EDWARD G. WILSON
Antiques

PHILLY STAMP & COIN CO.

RARE STAMPS & COINS
BOUGHT - SOLD - APPRAISED

1804

ama
PLACE
FULL NEWS

Center City West Commercial District

Photo # 10



Center City West Commercial District

Photo* 11



Center City West Commercial District

Photo* 12



Center City West Commercial District

Photo* 13



Center City West Commercial District

Photo* 14



Center City West Commercial District

Photo* 15



Center City West Commercial District

Photo* 16



Center City West Commercial District

Photo* 17



Center City West Commercial District

Photo# 18



Center City West Commercial District

Photo* 19



Center City West Commercial District

Photo* 20



Center City West Commercial District

Photo*21



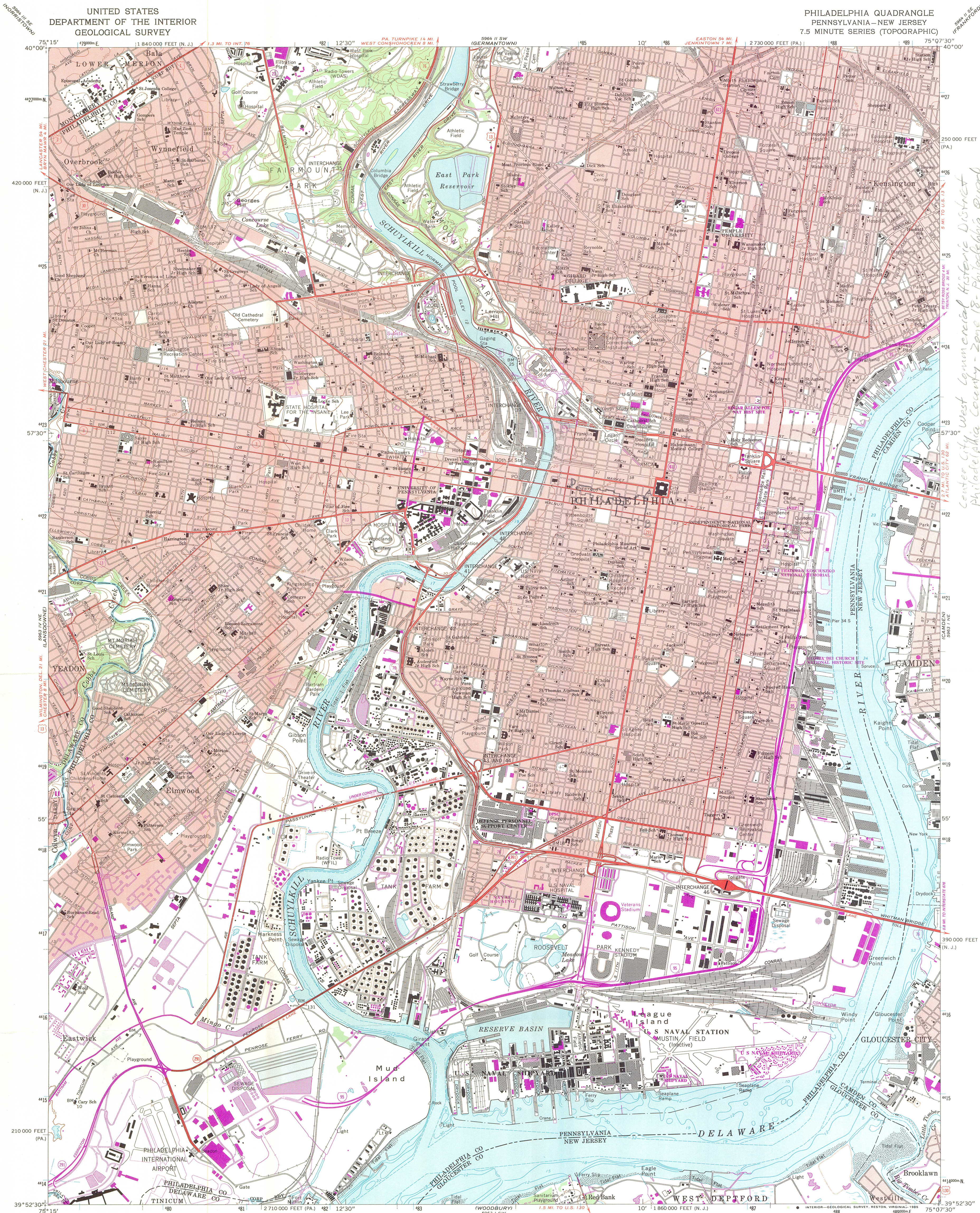
Center City West Commercial District

Photo* 22



Center City West Commercial District

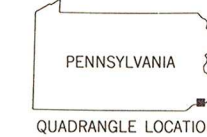
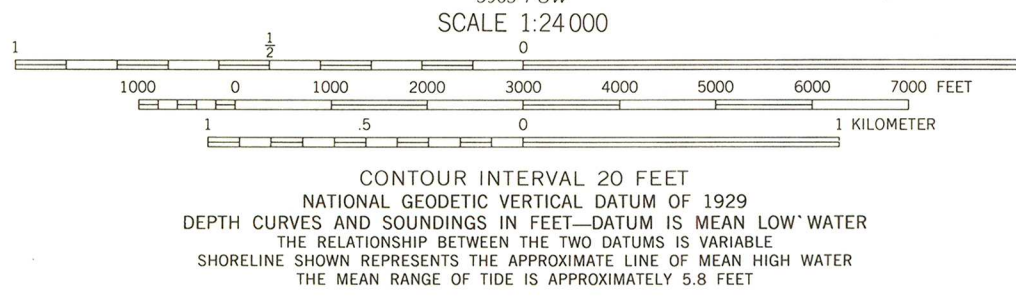
Photo# 23



Center City West Commercial Historic District
Philadelphia County - Zone 18 - Philadelphia Quad
A E485805 N442160 C E484950/442210
B E485755 N442170 D E484990 4420300

Mapped by the U. S. Coast & Geodetic Survey
Edited and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, 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 NOS chart 280 (1967)
This information is not intended for navigational purposes
Polyconic projection. 10,000-foot grid ticks based on the Pennsylvania
coordinate system, south zone, and New Jersey coordinate system
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 18, shown in blue
1927 North American Datum
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 6 meters south and
31 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled
by the Geological Survey from aerial photographs
taken 1982 and other sources. This information
not field checked. Map edited 1985



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
Interstate Route U.S. Route State Route

PHILADELPHIA, PA. - N. J.
39075-H2-TF-024

1967
PHOTOREVISED 1985
DMA 5963 1 NW - SERIES V831



CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION
1313 City Hall Annex
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19107
MU 6-4543 and Mu 6-4583

EDWARD A. MONTGOMERY, JR.
Chairman

RICHARD TYLER, Ph.D.
Historic Preservation Officer

PATRICIA SIEMIONTKOWSKI
Assistant Historic Preservation Officer

4 November 1987

RECEIVED

NOV 10 1987

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Dr. Brent Glass
State Historic Preservation Officer
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
William Penn Memorial Museum
Box 1026
Harrisburg, PA 17108-1026

Dear Dr. Glass:

Pursuant to the Certified Local Government Agreement between the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and the City of Philadelphia, the Philadelphia Historical Commission at its meeting of 28 October 1987 considered the nomination of the Center City West Commercial Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places.

In the judgment of this Commission, the Center City West Commercial Historic District meets the criteria for entry on the National Register. This district possesses significance in Philadelphia's commercial history and represents the evolution of a prestigious twentieth-century retail and business sector from a nineteenth-century residential neighborhood. The district also has architectural importance for its collection of twentieth-century commercial design, particularly in the Art Deco and Art Moderne modes.

The Commission concurs in this nomination and urges the listing of this district on the National Register.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this nomination.

Yours truly,

Richard Tyler
Historic Preservation Officer

RT:sj



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL AND MUSEUM COMMISSION
BUREAU FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
BOX 1026
HARRISBURG, PENNSYLVANIA 17108-1026

National Register of Historic Places
US Dept. of Interior
Carol Shull, Chief of Registration
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Re: NR Nomination Forms

Dear Ms. Shull:

The following National Register nomination forms are being
submitted/resubmitted for your review and response:

see attached list

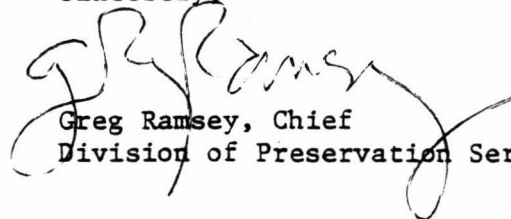
The proposed action is:

XXX listing in the National Register

 determination of eligibility (owner objection)

If you have any questions regarding the nominations please
call us at (717) 783-8947.

Sincerely,


Greg Ramsey, Chief
Division of Preservation Services

GR:sk

NOV 24 1987

Pitcairn Building
Philadelphia County

Center City West Commercial Historic District
Philadelphia County

Bucher Thal Historic District
Lancaster County

Adam Orris Residence
Cumberland County

Pine Grove Historic District
Schuylkill County

Mt. Pleasant Historic District
Schuylkill County

Moorestburg School
Montour County

Hartman Cider Press
Berks County