

**NOMINATION OF PUBLIC INTERIOR PORTION OF BUILDING OR STRUCTURE**  
**PHILADELPHIA REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**PHILADELPHIA HISTORICAL COMMISSION**

**SUBMIT ALL ATTACHED MATERIALS ON PAPER AND IN ELECTRONIC FORM ON CD (MS WORD FORMAT)**

**1. ADDRESS OF HISTORIC RESOURCE** (must comply with an Office of Property Assessment address)

Street address: **1301-25 Chestnut St**  
Postal code: **19107** Councilmanic District: **1st**

**2. NAME OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

Historic Name: **Grand Court, John Wanamaker Store**  
Current Name: **Macy's Center City**

**3. TYPE OF HISTORIC RESOURCE**

☒ Building Interior ☐ Structure Interior

**4. PROPERTY INFORMATION**

Condition: ☐ excellent ☒ good ☐ fair ☐ poor ☐ ruins  
Occupancy: ☒ occupied ☐ vacant ☐ under construction ☐ unknown  
Current use: **Department store / office space**

**5. BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Please attach an interior plan with the boundary marked and written description of the boundary.

**6. DESCRIPTION**

Please attach a description of the historic resource and supplement with current photographs.

**7. INVENTORY OF FEATURES AND FIXTURES**

Please attach an inventory of all features including fixtures with their locations within the public interior portion indicated on architectural plans and/or annotated photographs (keyed to the plans).

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

Please attach the Statement of Significance.

Period of Significance (from year to year): from **1910** to **present**  
Date(s) of construction and/or alteration: **1910-1911; 1991, 1997 (office conversion, upper floors)**  
Architect, engineer, and/or designer: **Daniel H. Burnham, D.H. Burnham & Co.**  
Builder, contractor, and/or artisan:  
Original owner: **John Wanamaker**  
Other significant persons:

**CRITERIA FOR DESIGNATION:**

The historic resource satisfies the following criteria for designation (check all that apply):

- ☒ (a) Has significant character, interest or value as part of the development, heritage or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past; or,
- ☐ (b) Is associated with an event of importance to the history of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☒ (c) Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style; or,
- ☒ (d) Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen; or,
- ☒ (e) Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation; or,
- ☐ (f) Contains elements of design, detail, materials or craftsmanship which represent a significant innovation; or,
- ☐ (g) Is part of or related to a square, park or other distinctive area which should be preserved according to an historic, cultural or architectural motif; or,
- ☒ (h) Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community or City; or,
- ☐ (i) Has yielded, or may be likely to yield, information important in pre-history or history; or
- ☒ (j) Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social or historical heritage of the community.

**10. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Please attach a bibliography.

**11. NOMINATOR**

Name with Title Benjamin Leech, consultant Email patrick@preservationalliance.com  
Organization Preservation Alliance for Greater Philadelphia Date 6/1/2017  
Street Address 1608 Walnut St, Suite 804 Telephone 215-546-1146  
City, State, and Postal Code Philadelphia, PA 19103  
Nominator ☐ is ☒ is not the property owner.

**12. PROPERTY OWNER**

Name: Behringer Harvard REIT  
Organization \_\_\_\_\_  
Street Address: 15601 Dallas Pkwy, Suite 600  
City, State, and Postal Code: Addison, TX 75001

**PHC USE ONLY**

Date of Receipt: June 1, 2017

☒ Correct-Complete ☐ Incorrect-Incomplete

Date: August 4, 2017

Date of Notice Issuance: August 7, 2017

Property Owner at Time of Notice

Name: Behringer Harvard REIT

Address: 15601 Dallas Pkwy, Suite 600

City: Addison

State: TX

Postal Code: 75001

Date(s) Reviewed by the Committee on Historic Designation: June 20, 2018

Date(s) Reviewed by the Historical Commission: July 13, 2018

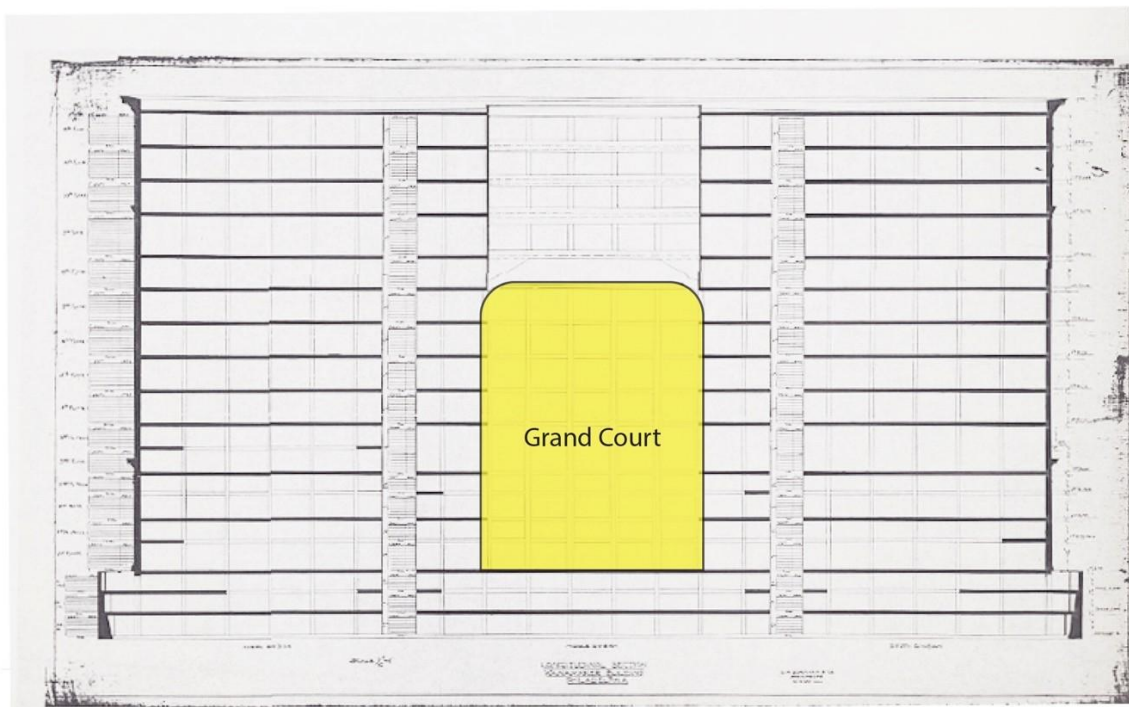
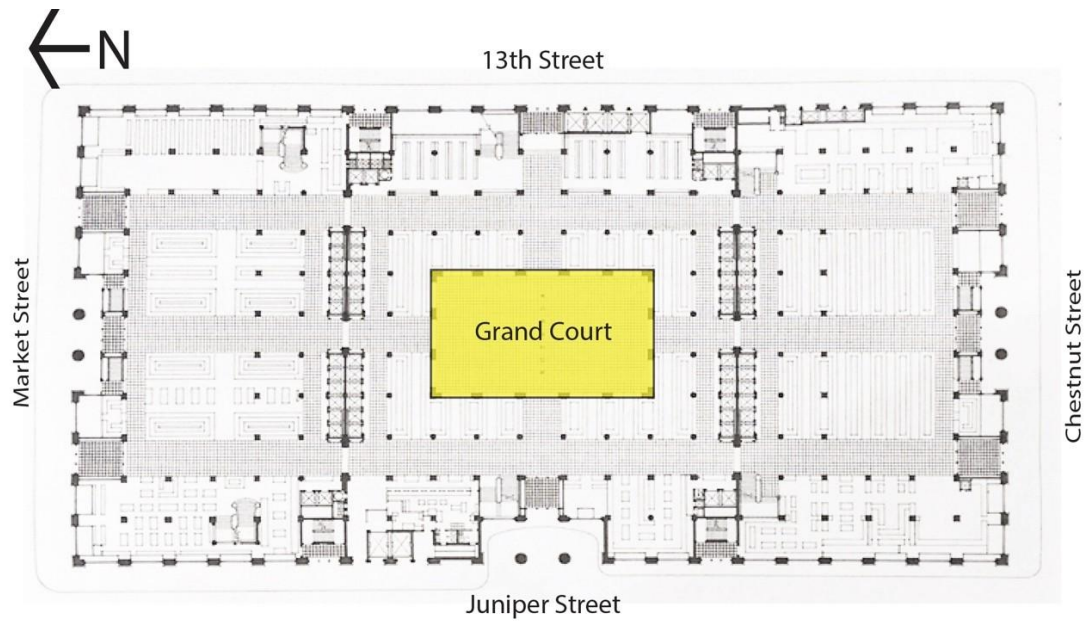
Date of Final Action: July 13, 2018

☒ Designated ☐ Rejected

4/12/13

## **5. Boundary Description**

The Grand Court of the former John Wanamaker Store at 1301-25 Chestnut Street is a seven-story open interior volume measuring approximately 122 feet long by 66 feet wide and 150 feet high. The clear-span area is enclosed by a ground-floor perimeter arcade and upper-floor colonnade walls rising the full height of the space. The boundaries of this nomination include the entire Grand Court volume from floor to ceiling; the inner, outer, and intrados surfaces of the ground-floor arcade; the inward and lateral-facing surfaces of the upper-floor columns and colonnade walls; the architectural elements that span between and in plane with these columns; and all components of the Wanamaker Organ visible from within the Court, including the organ console located in the middle bay of the east second-floor gallery. These boundaries exclude the outer faces of the upper-floor colonnade walls and those portions of the Wanamaker Organ that are not visible from within the Court. This defined Grand Court area satisfies the definition of a public interior eligible for historic designation as set forth in the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance and defined in the Philadelphia Zoning Code, §14-203 (252) as “an interior portion of a building or structure that is, or was designed to be, customarily open or accessible to the public, including by invitation,” and which retains “a substantial portion of the features reflecting design for public use.” The visible Wanamaker Organ components satisfy the definition of fixtures of a public interior space as set forth in the Philadelphia Historical Commission Rules and Regulations 2.10.



Nominated Grand Court area delineated on ground floor plan (top) and longitudinal section (bottom), not to scale.

Sources: (Top) *Architectural Works of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, Chicago: And Their Predecessors, D.H. Burnham & Co, and Graham, Burnham & Co.* London: Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, 1933, p. 166  
 (Bottom) Wanamaker Collection, Athenaeum of Philadelphia, BUR\*003\*100

## 6. Description

The Grand Court is the primary interior feature of the former John Wanamaker Store, completed in 1910 and designed by D.H. Burnham & Co. The 12-story Renaissance Revival building occupies the full city block bounded by Chestnut, Market, Juniper, and 13th Streets in Center City Philadelphia, immediately southeast of City Hall. The Grand Court is an open atrium space, centrally located within the building and oriented along its north-south axis. It measures approximately 122 feet and five bays in length, 66 feet and three bays in width, and approximately 150 feet and seven stories in height, surrounded on all sides by a ground-floor arcade and upper-floor colonnade walls. The south gallery wall features the ornamental front of the Wanamaker Organ, the largest operating pipe organ in the world [Fig. 1]. The Wanamaker Eagle, a landmark 10-foot bronze sculpture, is also prominently located within the court's central aisle [Fig. 3].

The Grand Court's ground-floor arcade walls rise twenty-five feet in height and are clad in white marble. Its half-round arches rest on rectangular piers with green marble plinths and capitals; its intrados and spandrels are also decorated with green marble insets [Figs. 2-3]. A *fleur de lis* fascia band and cornice featuring egg-and-dart, bead-and-reel, and waterleaf moldings terminates the arcade [Figs. 4, 8]. The south arcade wall features a pair of massive three-tiered marble modillions carrying a projecting balcony that spans the court's full width at the base of the Wanamaker Organ; the balcony soffit is clad in bookfaced marble panels enframed by Greek fret, waterleaf, and bead-and-reel molding [Fig. 5].

The main floor area is clad in white marble with green marble borders and diamond insets. A central aisle runs the length of the space with the massive Wanamaker Eagle at its northern end, facing south and standing on a heavy stone base. Originally open on all sides, the east arcade is currently infilled with contemporary display fixtures, and contemporary carpeting covers the eastern third of the court floor. Four contemporary display islands stand to the west of the central aisle [Fig. 1].

Beneath the south balcony, one of the arcade piers features a prominent inset bronze inscription reading, “LET THOSE WHO FOLLOW ME CONTINUE TO BUILD WITH THE PLUMB OF HONOR THE LEVEL OF TRUTH AND THE SQUARE OF INTEGRITY EDUCATION COURTESY AND MUTUALITY - John Wanamaker” [Fig. 6]. Another bronze inscription is set into the floor beneath the central arch of the western arcade, reading “THIS STAR LOCATES THE PLACE WHERE THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES WILLIAM H TAFT DELIVERED THE ADDRESS OF DEDICATION OF THIS BUILDING DECEMBER THIRTIETH 1911” [Fig. 7].

Above the ground-floor arcade, the Grand Court’s upper floors rise as a three-tiered, six-story colonnade crowned by a groined attic vault set beneath a large multi-paned skylight. Each colonnade tier rises two stories on fluted piers capped by gilded Corinthian (third floor), Ionic (fifth-floor), and Doric (seventh floor) capitals; intermediate cornice bands with rosette- and acanthus-studded soffits cap the lower two tiers [Figs. 1, 4, 10, 16]. The side panels of each pier are decorated with plaster cable scroll patterning, and gilded consoles bracket each bay of the second-, fourth-, and sixth-floor galleries. Vitruvian-scrolled and Greek-keyed spandrel panels decorate the exposed floor plates at the third- and fifth-floor levels [Fig. 8]. Cast iron balustrade railings span each gallery bay. The attic tier terminates in half-round arches below festooned, coffered groins [Figs. 10, 16]. All galleries were originally open to the court, but the top four floors have since been enclosed with clear glass panels following the conversion of those floors into offices. The skylight was originally day-lit, but has since been covered and spanned by an upper-floor atrium.

The Wanamaker Organ is located immediately south of the Grand Court, behind an organ screen that dominates the south gallery wall [Figs. 11-13]. The ornate two-story pipe case above the second-floor balcony is technically ornamental and not part of the functioning organ itself, but is original to the organ installation and was designed by D.H. Burnham & Co. specifically for the Grand Court. It features three domed pipe towers flanked by side cabinets with swan-neck pediments. The tall central dome supports the gilded figure of a herald angel holding two long trumpets. The balcony features a gilded, scrolled metal railing; checkerboard screen panels fill the third-floor gallery bays behind the organ case. The organ is played from a large console

located along the east side of the second-floor gallery, highly visible from the court floor behind a gilded railing matching that of the south balcony and enclosed within a tall wood balustrade screen [Figs. 14-15]. Functional pipe divisions are also visible within the attic bays of both the south and north gallery walls [Figs. 10, 16].

## **7. Inventory of Features and Fixtures**

### **Historic Features and Finishes**

1. Marble walls (Ground-floor perimeter arcade)
2. Marble floor (Ground floor)
3. Marble balcony modillions (Ground floor)
4. Bronze floor wall inscription (Ground floor)
5. Bronze wall instruction (Ground floor)
6. Plaster pilasters, cornices, modillions, and capitals (Upper-floor colonnades)
7. Cast iron balustrades (Upper floor galleries)
8. Groined plaster ceiling
9. Skylight frame

### **Historic Fixtures**

- A. Wanamaker Eagle
- B. Wanamaker Organ display front
- C. Checkerboard scrolled organ screens
- D. Organ console and balustrade
- E. Wanamaker Organ pipe divisions, north and south attics
- F. Metal balcony rails (organ loft and console)

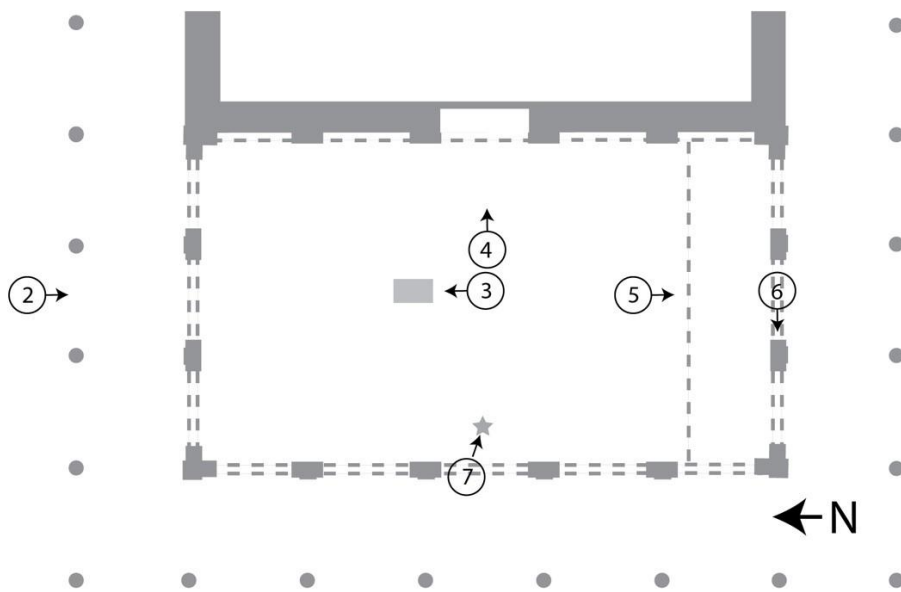
### **Non-contributing Features, Fixtures and Finishes**

- a. Contemporary carpet (Ground floor)
- b. Contemporary display islands, shelving, and other retail furniture (Ground floor)
- c. Glass partitions (4<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> floor galleries)

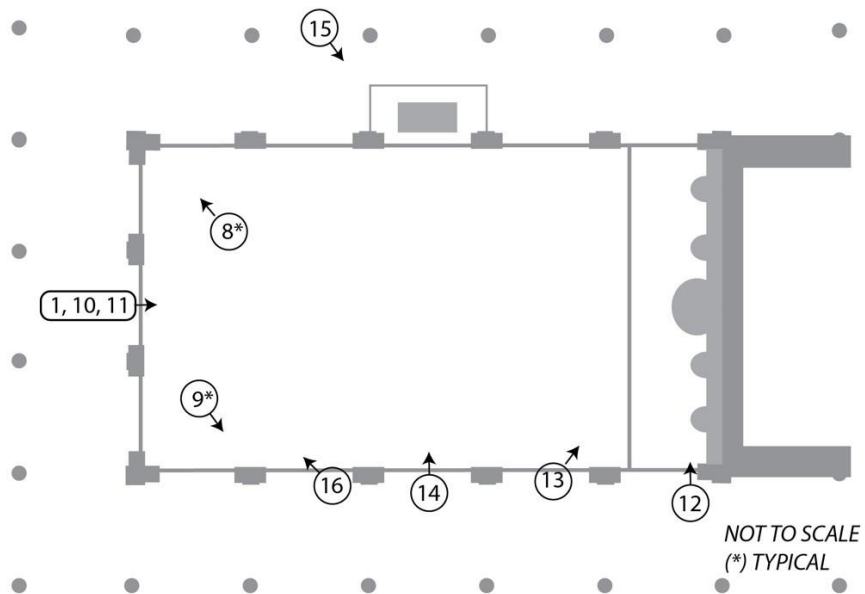


## 8. Annotated Photographs and Photo Key

GROUND FLOOR



SECOND/THIRD FLOOR





**Figure 1:** Grand Court as viewed from the third-floor gallery, looking south.



**Figure 2:** Exterior of perimeter arcade wall, looking south into the Grand Court from the adjacent ground floor area. Fluted pilasters, cornice and marble spandrel panels of arcade wall included in nominated area boundaries.

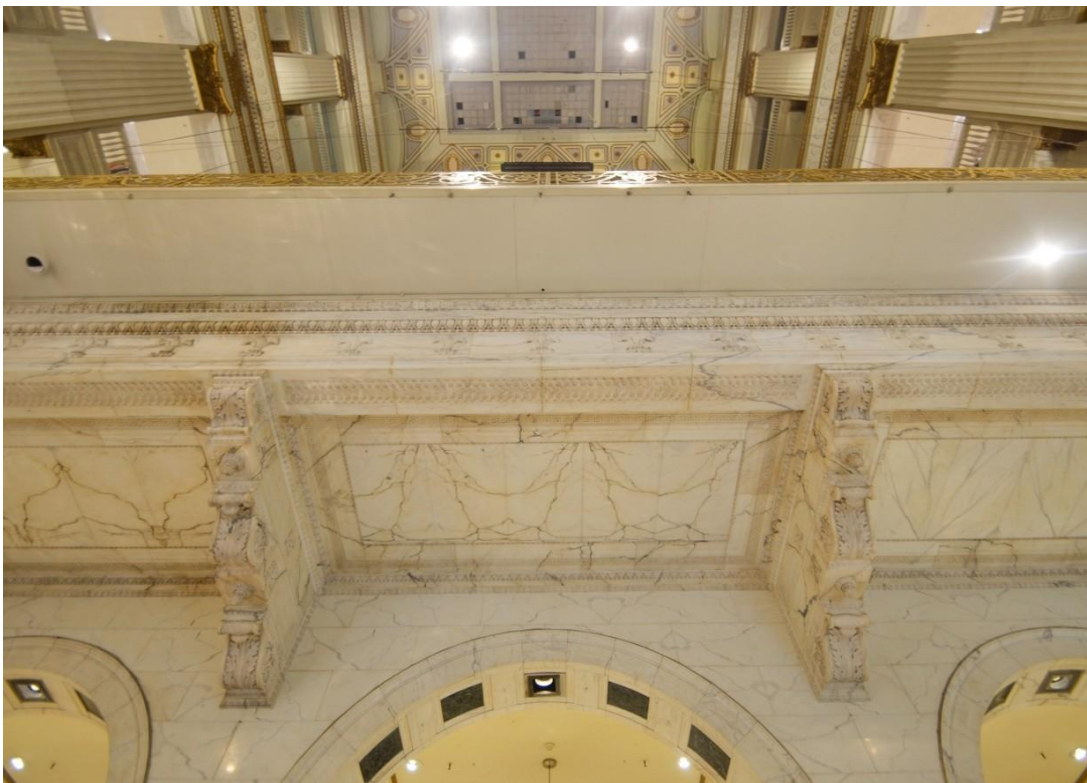




**Figure 3:** Looking north from center of Grand Court. Wanamaker Eagle included in nomination as a fixture. All lateral faces of upper-floor colonnades included in nominated area boundaries.



**Figure 4:** Looking east from center of Grand Court; organ console visible at center of second-floor gallery.

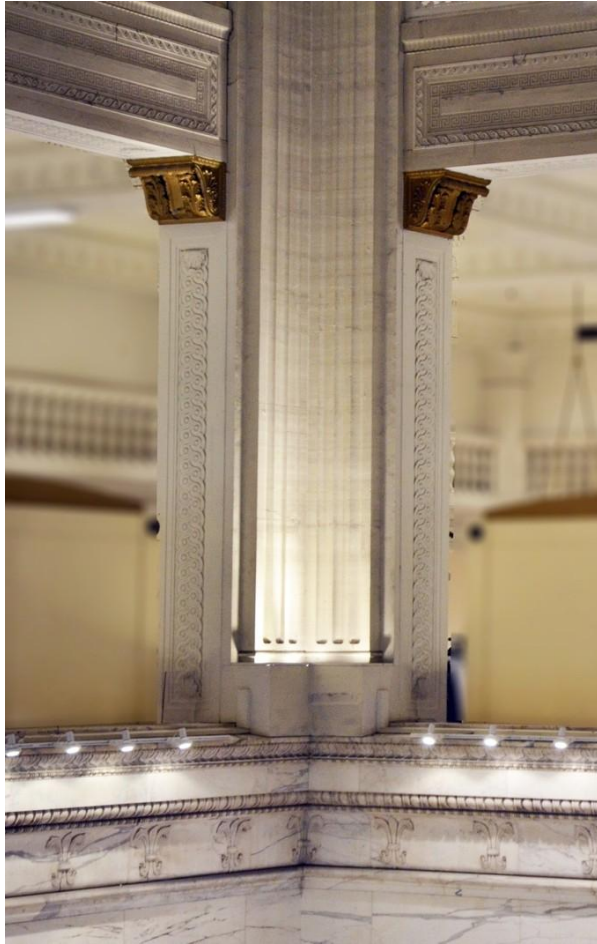


**Figure 5:** Balcony soffit and marble modillions beneath organ loft.





**Figures 6-7:** (L) Bronze wall inscription below organ loft. (R) Bronze floor inscription south of central aisle.



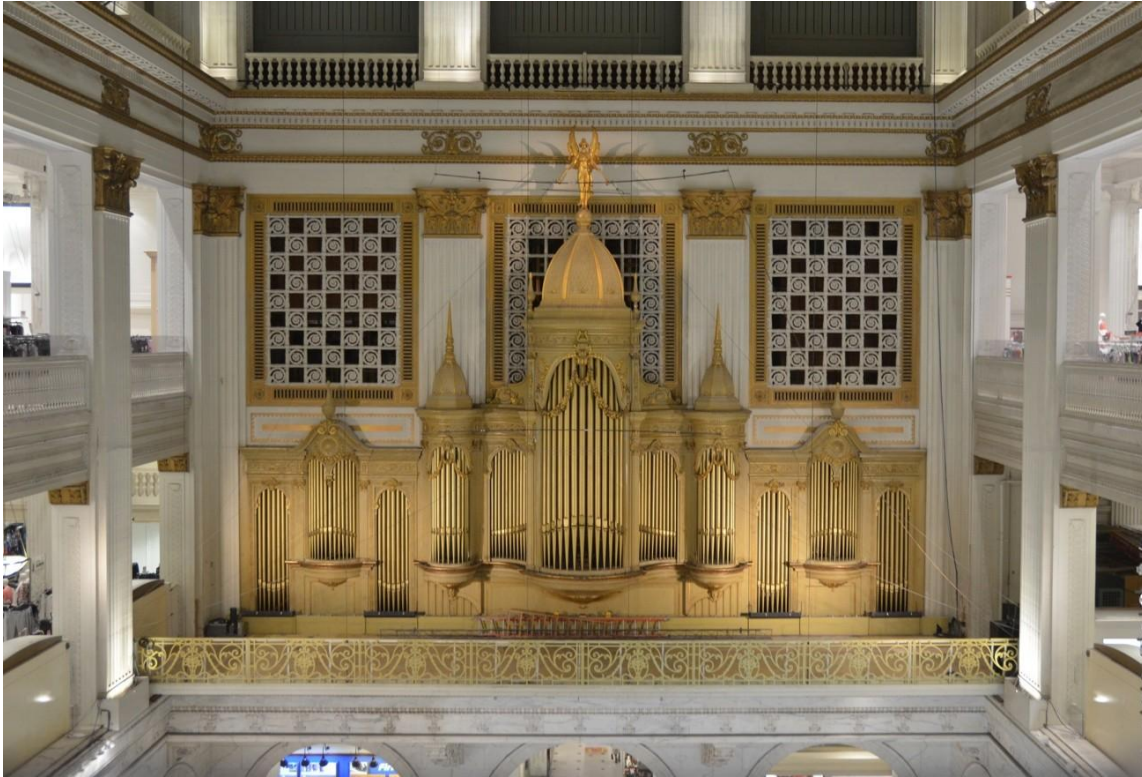
**Figures 8-9:** (L) Typical detail of second-floor colonnade, including ground-floor arcade cornice, spandrel panels between second and third floors, gilded modillion brackets, and cable-scrolled lateral column faces, all included in nominated area boundaries (R) Typical third-floor Corinthian capital detail and portion of projecting cornice.





**Figure 10:** South gallery wall above organ loft, showing typical fifth-floor Ionic capitals, seventh-floor Doric capitals, groined coffered ceiling, and cast iron balustrades. Functional pipe divisions at seventh floor are contributing fixtures; glass partitions and contemporary scaffolding are non-contributing alterations.

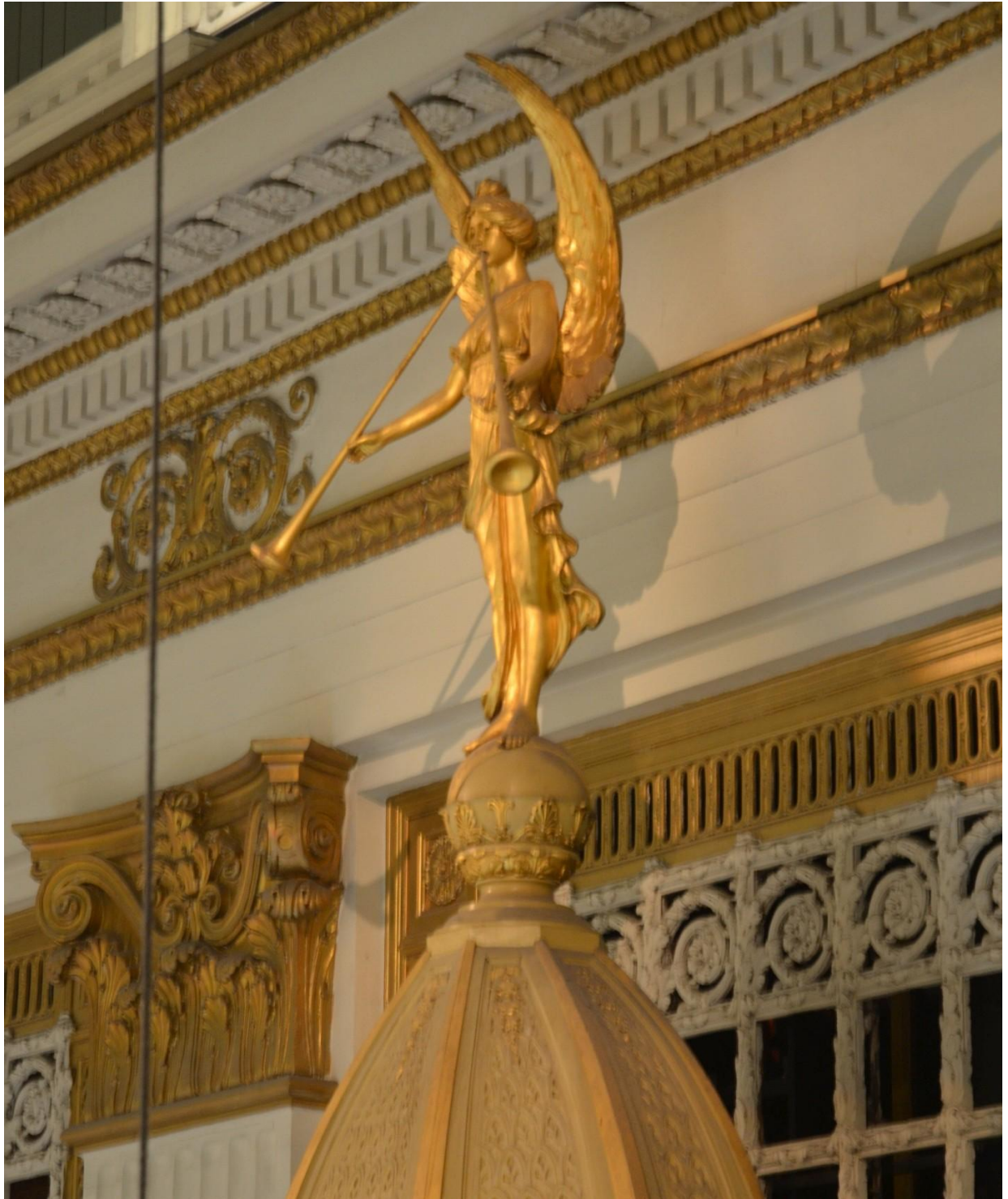




**Figure 11:** Ornamental organ case and checkerboard screens are original, contributing fixtures.



**Figure 12:** Organ console (bottom left), organ case and screen (right).



**Figure 13:** Detail of domed organ case featuring original gilded herald angel.





**Figure 14:** Organ console and metal railing



**Figure 15:** Organ console podium and balustrade, included as a contributing fixture in nominated area boundaries.



**Figure 16:** North gallery attic with functional pipe division, included as a contributing fixture.

## 9. Significance

The Grand Court of the former John Wanamaker Store is the primary interior feature of the landmark building designed by D.H. Burnham & Co. for John Wanamaker, one of the most successful merchants of his generation and a pioneer in the development of the modern American department store. The building was constructed in three sequential phases between 1904 and 1911, and was formally dedicated on December 30, 1911. The Grand Court itself was completed and first opened to the public in 1910; since that time, it has remained open and accessible through multiple ownership changes. The Grand Court also features the Wanamaker Organ, the largest operable pipe organ in the world, which debuted in 1911 and reached its full 28,604-pipe scale by 1930. The Wanamaker Organ's ornamental front, keyboard console, and upper pipe divisions are integral fixtures of the main Grand Court space.

The Wanamaker Building was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1971 and the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places in 1974,<sup>1</sup> and was declared a National Historic Landmark in 1978. The Wanamaker Eagle, an iconic sculpture located prominently within the Grand Court, was added to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places as a historic object in 2001. Today the Grand Court is under the stewardship of Macy's, which continues to operate the first three floors of the building, including the Grand Court, as a department store. The building's upper floors were converted to office use in 1991 and 1997.

The Grand Court is an architecturally and culturally significant public interior space which merits listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places by satisfying the following criteria as established in the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance §14-1004 (1):

A: Has significant character, interest, or value as part of the development, heritage, or cultural characteristics of the City, Commonwealth, or Nation or is associated with the life of a person significant in the past;

---

<sup>1</sup> This designation originally included the building's exterior, the Court and Crystal Tea Room interiors, and the Wanamaker Organ, per Philadelphia Historical Commission meeting minutes dated 6 June, 1974. Following the Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruling in *United Artists v. Philadelphia* 535 PA 370 (1993), the Philadelphia Historical Commission subsequently vacated all interior designations until the revision of the Philadelphia Historic Preservation Ordinance in 2009. Therefore only the exterior of the building is currently designated.

- C: Reflects the environment in an era characterized by a distinctive architectural style;
- D: Embodies distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style or engineering specimen;
- E: Is the work of a designer, architect, landscape architect or designer, or engineer whose work has significantly influenced the historical, architectural, economic, social, or cultural development of the City, Commonwealth or Nation;
- H: Owing to its unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood, community, or City; and
- J: Exemplifies the cultural, political, economic, social, or historical heritage of the community.

### **John Wanamaker and the Modern American Department Store**

The Wanamaker Building represents the culmination of Philadelphia merchant John Wanamaker's storied ascent from a modest Center City storekeeper to one of the leading business and civic leaders of his generation. Along with A.T. Stewart of New York, Marshall Field of Chicago, and others, Wanamaker helped invent the modern American department store, which evolved from nineteenth-century dry-goods stores in the decades following the Civil War.<sup>2</sup> Modeled partly after glamorous Parisian department stores like Bon Marché and Printemps, which were the among the first modern establishments to offer a variety of goods arranged into distinct departments under single ownership, Wanamaker's first "Grand Depot" opened in 1876 in a converted Pennsylvania Railroad freight depot on the site of the current Wanamaker Building [Fig. 17]. In it, Wanamaker greatly expanded a men's clothing shop he first established as Wanamaker & Brown's Oak Hall near 6th and Market in 1861. With the Grand Depot, Wanamaker proclaimed a "new kind of store" in which prices were standardized, returns were guaranteed, and wares ranging from men's and women's clothing, housewares and home furnishings, and luxury imports were available under one roof. Wanamaker was also one of the first American merchants to fully realize the power of print advertising, attracting

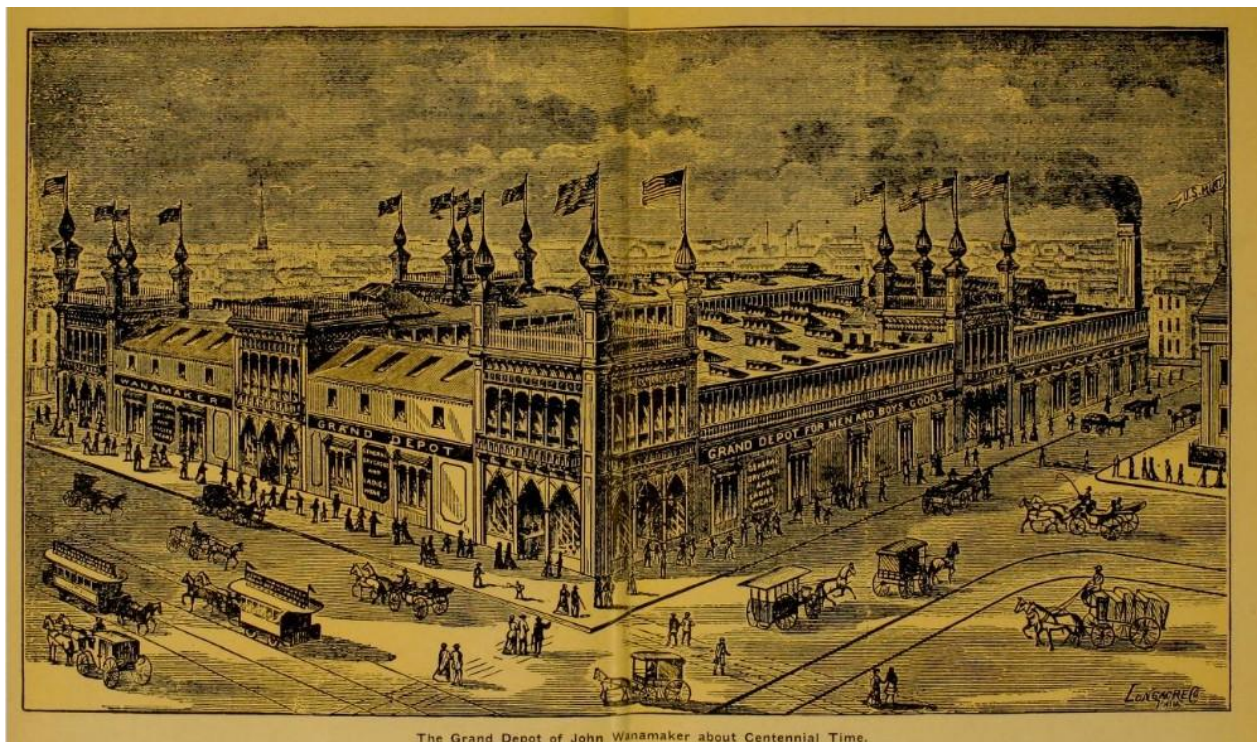
---

<sup>2</sup> Harris, Neil. "Shopping - Chicago Style," *Chicago Architecture 1872-1922: Birth of a Metropolis*, John Zukowsky, ed. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1987, p. 137; Sullivan, David, "Department Stores," *Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/department-stores/>; Pevsner, Nikolas, *A History of Building Types*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976, pp. 267-70.



thousands of shoppers daily to the Grand Depot through large newspaper advertisements crafted by the industry's first professional copywriters.

Advertising of a different sort was achieved through the architectural design of the Grand Depot itself, which was expanded and remodeled incrementally between 1876 and 1902. Opening at the same time as the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, which Wanamaker also helped plan and promote, the Grand Depot was designed to capture the attention of the massive crowds passing through Center City on their way to and from the West Philadelphia fairgrounds. Ornate entry pavilions were added to the existing freight depot, featuring Victorian Gothic storefronts and Moorish onion-domed turrets in a blend of showy eclecticism that was typical of the era's commercial architecture. However, only minimal architectural embellishments were added on the store's interior, which retained the utilitarian character of a train shed or market hall [Fig. 18]. Indeed, in both form and function, the Grand Depot had more in common with the palatial exhibition halls of the Centennial Exhibition itself than with any of its retail competitors in Center City-- at least at first.



**Figure 17:** "The Grand Depot of John Wanamaker about Centennial Time," highlighting Moorish Revival alterations to existing freight depot. Source: *Golden Book of the Wanamaker Stores*.



**Figure 18:** Original interior layout of the Grand Depot. Source: *Golden Book of the Wanamaker Stores*.

Wanamaker's experiment proved immensely popular and quickly inspired imitators and competitors. In Philadelphia, established dry goods merchants like Strawbridge & Clothier and N. Snellenberg & Co. soon followed Wanamaker's expansion suit, joined in the coming decades by Lit Brothers, Gimbels, and Frank & Seder.<sup>3</sup> These first department stores grew in a largely ad-hoc manner, often consolidating multiple existing structures into hodgepodge complexes-- a development pattern epitomized by the Lit Brothers' gradual expansion from a single commercial loft in 1891 to the entire 800 block of Market Street by 1918. Even purpose-built new department stores quickly outgrew themselves. Addison Hutton's 1890 Cooper & Conard store at 9th and Market Street, the first completely purpose-built department store structure in

<sup>3</sup> Sullivan, "Department Stores."



Philadelphia, was acquired by the Gimbel Brothers in 1894 and expanded numerous times over the next three decades.<sup>4</sup>

Likewise, Wanamaker expanded his Grand Depot footprint over time to fill all four street faces of its block, and expanded vertically with a six-story, clock-tower-crowned addition along 13th Street by 1887 [Fig. 19]. In a sign of evolving architectural tastes, the Moorish flair of the Grand Depot's original entrance pavilions was abandoned in later additions; the c.1887 block featured a loosely Neo-Grec facade with a clock tower that was itself remodeled in a more Beaux-Arts mode only a few years later.<sup>5</sup> By 1899, Wanamaker himself described his store as a “queer old patchwork building that has a three-fold charm about it-- utility, great strength, and incomparable economy. For a business building, barring its outside ugliness, it is perfect on the side of the small cost that has to be charged upon the goods for it.”<sup>6</sup>

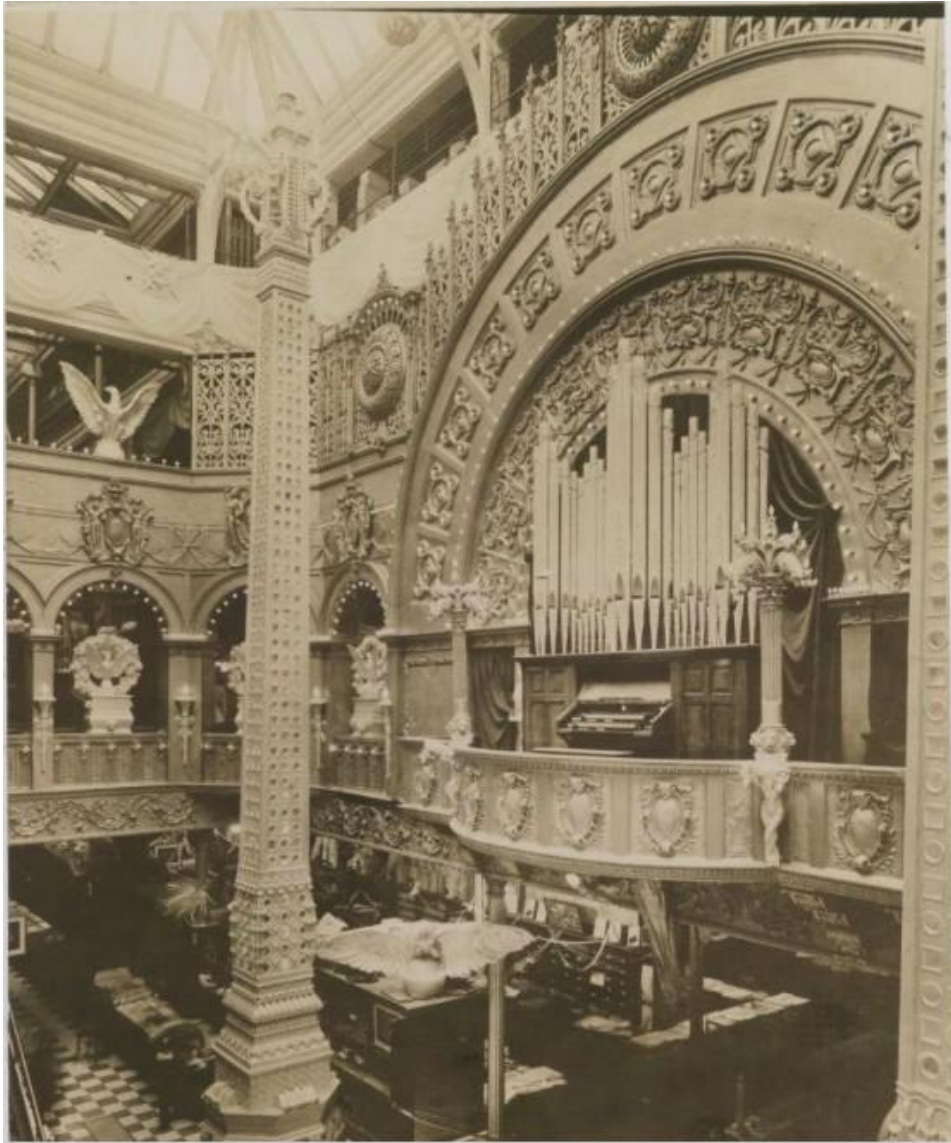


**Figure 19:** Two views of the Grand Depot and tower addition at 13<sup>th</sup> and Market Streets, looking east c.1889 (left) and southwest c.1900 (right). Note remodeling of clock tower on right. Photos via Free Library of Philadelphia Digital Collections.

<sup>4</sup> Arrigale, Lawrence M. and Keels, Thomas H. *Philadelphia's Golden Age of Retail*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012, p. 42.

<sup>5</sup> Some ambiguity surrounds the dates and architects of these additions and alterations, partly due to uncertain dates of historic photographs. A six-story factory and clock tower is indicated in plan on Hexamer's 1887 insurance map (plate 20) and depicted in a c.1889 photograph with a clock tower featuring a pyramidal roof, pedimented clock faces, and segmental arch louvers. By c.1900, photographs depict an arch-domed clock tower with a heavy classical cornice. The *Philadelphia Real Estate Record and Builders' Guide* cites architect T.P. Chandler preparing plans for “the reconstruction of the Grand Depot” in 1888, but whether this included either iteration of the clock tower is unknown.

<sup>6</sup> Wanamaker, John. *Annals of the Wanamaker System*. Philadelphia: John Wanamaker, 1899, n.p.



**Figure 20:** Transept of the Grand Depot, circa 1900. John Wanamaker Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania

For all his emphasis on economy, Wanamaker also recognized the importance of spectacle in attracting shoppers to his store. The Grand Depot eventually added an elaborate four-story interior atrium known as the Transept, lit by skylights and encircled on three sides by ornate galleries. A massive proscenium arch filled the fourth wall, framing a pipe organ and console played from a second-floor balcony [Fig. 20]. While its lavish architectural character perhaps challenges Wanamaker's claims of "incomparable economy," it also highlights the role that dramatic interior spaces played in capturing the imagination, and the shopping habits, of the

American public. As department stores proliferated across Philadelphia and the country in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, many featured similar interior atriums and light courts with attractions and entertainments beyond the goods offered for sale. Echoing at a smaller scale the grand European department store courts, glass-ceilinged World's Fair exhibition halls, and enclosed multi-tenant shopping arcades of the mid-nineteenth century, these new public gathering spaces served multiple purposes. In an era before cheap, safe, and consistent artificial illumination, light courts allowed for larger sales floors to be naturally lit on multiple levels of a building. They also helped orient shoppers in navigating ever more expansive and complex store layouts while simultaneously dramatizing their scale. Finally, along with their exterior facades, department store light courts provided an opportunity for architectural expression as a means of distinguishing a store from its competitors.<sup>7</sup> This spirit of one-upsmanship no doubt played a role in Wanamaker's decision in 1902 to transform the Grand Depot into something entirely new and modern for the twentieth century.

### **Daniel H. Burnham and the City Beautiful Movement**

Wanamaker is rightly credited with helping shape the American department store as a business model and a cultural phenomenon. When he determined that the Grand Depot was no longer able to support his vision for the future, he turned to Daniel H. Burnham, an architect rightly credited with helping shape the department store as an architectural phenomenon: a commercial structure expressed at a civic scale, both inside and out. Burnham first rose to national prominence as Director of Works of the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago. His plan for a "White City" of aesthetically coordinated, rationally planned Beaux Arts exhibition halls helped convert a generation of American architects and civic leaders to the philosophy of the City Beautiful movement, which championed Classical Revival architecture and comprehensive urban planning as twin avenues toward an improved social order in America's industrialized urban centers. Between 1894 and 1912, D.H. Burnham & Company designed more than 200 office towers, banks, train stations, museums, and department stores for high-profile clients across the country;

---

<sup>7</sup> Longstreth, Richard. *The American Department Store Transformed, 1920-1960*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010, p. 28; Pevsner, p. 262ff.

the vast majority combined rational planning principles and state-of-the-art construction technology with traditional Greek, Roman, and Renaissance design motifs.<sup>8</sup>

Around 1902, Wanamaker approached Burnham to design a new store, one that was exponentially larger and more grandiose than the “queer old patchwork” Grand Depot. Wanamaker was no doubt familiar with Burnham’s recently-completed Marshall Field & Company in Chicago (1902), as well as his earlier Land Title Building (1898), a stone’s throw away on Broad Street. The former must especially have captured Wanamaker’s attention: a 12-story, stone-faced Renaissance Revival department store block with two soaring interior atriums, prominently located along Chicago’s main commercial artery. Wanamaker’s vision for Philadelphia was even more ambitious. As colorfully retold in the 1911 tome *Golden Book of the Wanamaker Stores*, Wanamaker challenged Burnham thusly:

“What you must do for me,” said the Founder of this business, “is to strive to say in stone what this business has said to the world in deed. You must make a building that is solid and true. It shall be of granite and steel throughout. It shall stand four-square to the city-- simple, unpretentious, noble, classic-- a work of art, and, humanly speaking, a monument for all time.”<sup>9</sup>

Burnham’s rational, classical approach aligned perfectly with Wanamaker’s business sense and newfound embrace of City Beautiful-era aesthetics. One even wonders how much of Burnham’s own architectural critique of the old Grand Depot reverberated in Wanamaker’s characteristically didactic description of his new store:

Suppose it had been a gingerbread, fantastical sort of building, with turrets and fretwork, minarets and Renaissance carvings, and stucco gorgeousness, would it have been art? No-- because it would not have been SINCERE. It would not have

---

<sup>8</sup> Hines, Thomas S. *Burnham of Chicago*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974, p. 272.

<sup>9</sup> Wanamaker, John. *Golden Book of the Wanamaker Stores: Jubilee Year 1861-1911*. Philadelphia: John Wanamaker, 1911, p. 246.

been SUITABLE. It would not have been SIMPLE. It would not have been expressive of the SOUL within it.<sup>10</sup>

Construction broke ground in 1904 and commenced in three sequential phases, allowing the store to remain open for the duration of construction. Burnham designed the new steel-framed, granite-faced building to rise in three unified but structurally independent parts, separated internally by firewalls, with a large light well at the center of the middle section. Once completed, this symmetrical, rational plan allowed the public to enter the building from all sides, pass freely through the block on the ground floor, and circumnavigate the well-lit upper floors using the interior light court for orientation. Hidden fire doors would isolate each section only in the case of fire; otherwise passage from section to section was clear and unencumbered. In total, the new store boasted nearly 45 acres of floor area, ten floors of merchandise, the largest dining room in Philadelphia (the Crystal Tea Room), two auditoriums (Greek Hall and Egyptian Hall), a number of period-decorated suites, and the Grand Court, the symbolic heart of the new complex.<sup>11</sup> Substantially completed by late 1910, Wanamaker scheduled its grand dedication ceremonies for Dec. 30th, 1911 to coincide with the 50th anniversary of his business empire [Fig. 21]. Guests of honor at the Grand Court ceremony included Burnham, who chartered a private train from Chicago to carry 50 personal guests, and President Howard Taft, the only sitting president ever to dedicate a department store. Burnham considered the building to be one of his most significant designs, writing to a friend that “the building as a whole, both inside and outside, is the most monumental commercial structure ever erected anywhere in the world.”<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Hines, p. 303.



**Figure 21:** Dedication ceremonies in the Grand Court, Dec. 30, 1911. Photo courtesy of Friends of the Wanamaker Organ.

## The Wanamaker Organ and the Wanamaker Eagle

The Grand Court is closely associated with two of its most iconic features: the Wanamaker Organ and the Wanamaker Eagle. Both were originally on display at the St. Louis World's Fair of 1904, purchased by Wanamaker during construction of the new building, and installed in the Grand Court by 1911. The former was already recognized as the largest pipe organ in the world at the time of its installation, requiring thirteen railroad boxcars to transport its 10,000 pipes from St. Louis to Philadelphia.<sup>13</sup> Through a series of additions in the 1910s and 1920s, the organ more than doubled in size and now boasts 28,500 pipes, remaining the world's largest operable organ (Atlantic City's Boardwalk Hall contains more pipes, but the majority are non-functional).<sup>14</sup>

<sup>13</sup> "The Greatest Organ in the World," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 22, 1911, p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> Biswanger, Ray. *Music in the Marketplace: The Story of Philadelphia's Historic Wanamaker Organ*. Bryn Mawr, PA: Friends of the Wanamaker Organ, 1999.



Rodman Wanamaker, John Wanamaker's son, is credited with the idea of a Grand Court Organ, which was not part of Burnham's original scheme. The younger Wanamaker recognized the Grand Court's potential as a musical venue early in the store's construction, but realized that a brand new organ of sufficient size for the space could not be completed in time for the building's dedication. The St. Louis World's Fair Organ, designed and built by the Los Angeles Art Organ Company, was originally intended for the Kansas City Convention Center after its fair debut, but ended up in indefinite storage following that plan's collapse.<sup>15</sup> It was purchased by the Wanamakers in 1909, who then commissioned Burnham's firm to design a new ornamental front to complement the architecture of the Grand Court. Installation was complete by 1911; the organ's public debut occurred at 9:00am, June 22nd, 1911, timed to coincide exactly with the coronation of King George V of England [Fig. 23].<sup>16</sup> Since that time, free public organ recitals have been hosted in the Grand Court virtually every business day, and a series of notable after-hours concerts have featured the leading organists of the era, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and other musical dignitaries [Fig. 22].



**Figure 22:** Leopold Stokowski and the Philadelphia Orchestra performing with the Wanamaker Organ, c. 1920. John Wanamaker Collection, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>15</sup> Lisicky, Michael J. *Wanamaker's: Meet Me at the Eagle*. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2010.

<sup>16</sup> "The Greatest Organ in the World."

Philadelphia, Pa.,  
June 22, 1911

**WANAMAKER'S**

Store closes at 5 P. M.  
Weather: Fair

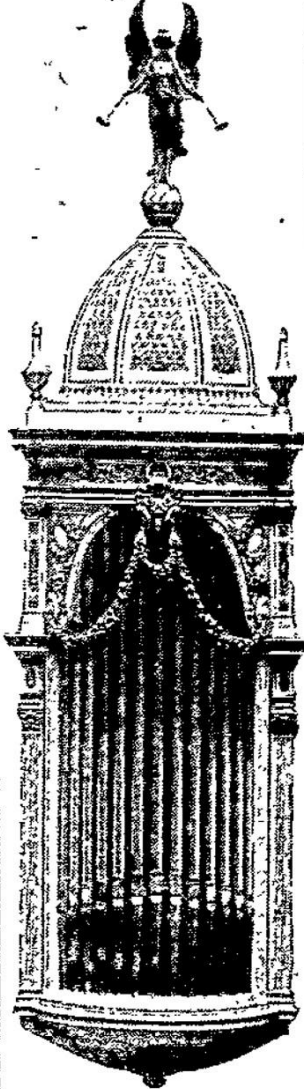
# The Greatest Organ In the World Will Speak Today In Honor of England's King and Queen

An organ of over 10,000 pipes, that took 13 freight cars to bring it from the St. Louis Exposition where it was first erected.

Now the crowning splendor of the Grand Court of Honor in the Wanamaker Store. A musical and architectural triumph, fittingly inaugurated on the day when a great American Store renders friendly salute to England's King and Queen.

Hear it when it participates in the special Coronation celebration, at 9 A. M., or hear it in recitals to be given today at 12.30 and 3.30 P. M.

To best appreciate its wonderful voice, hear it from one of the upper floor balconies, overlooking the Grand Court of Honor.



LITTLE TOWER OF THE  
GREAT ORGAN SCREEN

## Coronation Day

King George will be crowned at Westminster Abbey at 2 P. M., London time. On the moment a salute of English guns will roll around the world.

The time in Philadelphia will be 9.00 A. M. and at that moment the Coronation celebration will begin in the Grand Court of Honor with a fanfare of trumpets.

## PROGRAM

### PARTICIPATING:

JOHN WANAMAKER CHORAL SOCIETY  
JUNIOR CHORUS, J. W. C. I.  
J. W. C. I. MILITARY BAND AND BUGLE CORPS  
Chas. Sanglear, Director.  
THIRD BATTALION, J. W. C. I. CADETS  
Major Percival Thornton.  
MR. J. GRANVILLE-SMITH, A.R.C.O., Organist.

- 1.—SALUTE TO THE ENGLISH FLAG....."To the Colors!"  
J. W. C. I. Military Band and Bugle Corps  
Third Battalion J. W. C. I. Cadets Presenting Arms
- 2.—CHORUS—"Zadok the Priest".....Handel  
John Wanamaker Choral Society
- 3.—COMBINED CHORUS, BAND AND ORGAN—  
"The King Shall Rejoice".....Harris  
John Wanamaker Choral Society, Junior Chorus,  
Band and Organ, closing with  
"GOD SAVE THE KING!"

## A Procession of Historic English flags

INCIDENT to the celebration, the Third Battalion, First Regiment, J. W. C. I., will escort a collection of historic English standards, the most complete in America. The route will be from the Juniper Street Entrance, around the City Hall, to the Main Store Entrance, Market Street, and form in the Grand Court of Honor, where the ceremony of saluting the Royal Standard will be held. The collection comprises the following standards:

RICHARD I	WILLIAM AND MARY
EDWARD III	QUEEN ANNE
HENRY V	GEORGE I
JAMES I	GEORGE III
ROYAL STANDARD	
(Flown at sea by the members of the Royal Family.)	
GOVERNOR GENERAL OF INDIA	AUSTRALIA
QUEEN MOTHER'S FLAG	CINQUE PORTS

Figure 23: Philadelphia Inquirer advertisement, June 22, 1911.



Though the vast majority of the organ's physical structure is located in a series of chambers adjacent to, but not visible from, the Grand Court, many of its features are integral to the architecture of the space. Most prominent is the two-story organ screen above the Grand Court's south balcony, a non-functional but historically significant assemblage original to the building and designed by D.H. Burnham & Company specifically for the space. Also significant is the organ's keyboard console, prominently located along the Grand Court's east second-floor gallery. The six-manual console, its custom walnut cabinet, and its enclosing wooden balustrade were all designed and built in-house as part of the organ's 1920s-era expansion project, and are highly visible by design from within the Grand Court itself. Finally, functional pipe divisions are integrated into the arched openings of both north and south elevations of the Grand Court's seventh-floor attic level.

The Wanamaker Eagle is another highly significant Grand Court fixture with a pedigree tied to the St. Louis World's Fair. Purchased along with the organ in 1909, the ten-foot, 2,500-pound bronze sculpture was made by German sculptor August Gaul and cast in Frankfurt, Germany. It was installed on a solid granite base in the Grand Court in 1911 after special reinforcements were designed to carry its load, and it has remained in its current location ever since. Its iconic stature has been recognized by generations of Philadelphians invited to "meet at the Eagle," a phrase now synonymous with the Wanamaker legacy and the lore of the city itself. In 2001, it was added to the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places as a historic object.



**Figure 24:** The Grand Court, Wanamaker Eagle, and Wanamaker Organ, c.1911. *Architectural Works of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White*, 1933, p. 68.

## **Conclusion: The Grand Court in the Public Realm**

The Grand Court was conceived by Wanamaker and Burnham as a public gathering space in the idealistic City Beautiful tradition of beneficent commerce and democratized luxury. Remarkably, it has functioned continuously since 1911 exactly as intended: as an architectural spectacle, a music venue, a civic crossroads, and an engine of commerce. As the unifying core of one of America's most acclaimed and influential department store designs, it represents both an architectural archetype and a living cultural landscape, a privately-built, privately-owned space inextricably tied to the public life of the city.

Over the years, alterations to the space have been largely discreet and sensitive. Display cases and other furniture on the main sales floor have been periodically replaced over time. The east arcade has been enclosed with infill shelving, and contemporary carpeting covers portions of the original marble floor. A major 1991 renovation involved the conversion of upper floors to office use and an overbuild above the Grand Court skylight, permanently sealing the space from natural light and enclosing the upper-floor galleries behind glass partitions. However, none of these alterations have destroyed significant building fabric, and the overall character of the space is virtually identical to when it first opened to the public more than a century ago. Indeed, perhaps the most notable addition to the Grand Court since that time, both in terms of physical appearance and use, is one that has accrued historic significance in its own right and only enhanced the profile of the Grand Court as a civic space. Since 1956, Philadelphians have congregated in the Grand Court during the holiday season for an animated sound and light display that fills the entire south wall of the court with tens of thousands of programmed individual electric lights hung on wire netting backed by a suspended curtain. This temporary, seasonal installation is now arguably as integral to the Wanamaker legacy as the Eagle and Organ themselves.

The Grand Court of the former John Wanamaker Store clearly merits designation by the Philadelphia Historical Commission, meeting six criteria for listing on the Philadelphia Register of Historic Places. It possesses significant character, interest, and value as part of Philadelphia's shared history, culture, and heritage, and its association with John Wanamaker, one of the most

consequential Philadelphians of his generation, is self-evident (Criterion A). As an architectural expression of Beaux Arts classicism and an archetypical example of the light court as a character-defining feature of the department store type, the Grand Court reflects the architectural environment of an era shaped by the City Beautiful movement and embodies that movement's distinguishing characteristics as applied to a monumental commercial building (Criteria C and D). It also stands as a significant work of the architect most closely associated with that movement, Daniel H. Burnham, who indisputably influenced the architectural and cultural development of the entire Nation (Criterion E). Its singular physical characteristics include two of the most established and recognized Philadelphia icons, the Wanamaker Eagle and the Wanamaker Organ, in a unique and familiar architectural setting in the heart of Center City Philadelphia (Criterion H). Finally, through its rich and living legacy of daily organ recitals, seasonal light shows, its role as a civic crossroads, and its continued vitality as retail space, the Grand Court exemplifies the cultural, economic, social, and historical heritage of Philadelphia (Criterion J).

## 10. Bibliography

*Architectural Works of Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, Chicago: And Their Predecessors, D.H. Burnham & Co, and Graham, Burnham & Co.* London: Graham, Anderson, Probst & White, 1933.

Arrigale, Lawrence M. and Keels, Thomas H. *Philadelphia's Golden Age of Retail*. Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2012.

Biswanger, Ray. *Music in the Marketplace: The Story of Philadelphia's Historic Wanamaker Organ*. Bryn Mawr, PA: Friends of the Wanamaker Organ, 1999.

"The Greatest Organ in the World," *Philadelphia Inquirer*, June 22, 1911.

Harris, Neil. "Shopping - Chicago Style," *Chicago Architecture 1872-1922: Birth of a Metropolis*, John Zukowsky, ed. Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1987.

Hines, Thomas S. *Burnham of Chicago*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1974.

Lisicky, Michael J. *Wanamaker's: Meet Me at the Eagle*. Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2010.

Longstreth, Richard. *The American Department Store Transformed, 1920-1960*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2010.

Pevsner, Nikolas. *A History of Building Types*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

Sullivan, David. "Department Stores," *Encyclopedia of Greater Philadelphia*, <http://philadelphiaencyclopedia.org/archive/departments-stores>

Wanamaker, John. *Annals of the Wanamaker System*. Philadelphia: John Wanamaker, 1899.

Wanamaker, John. *Golden Book of the Wanamaker Stores: Jubilee Year 1861-1911*. Philadelphia: John Wanamaker, 1911.